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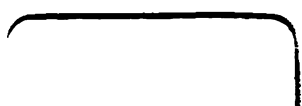
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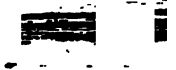
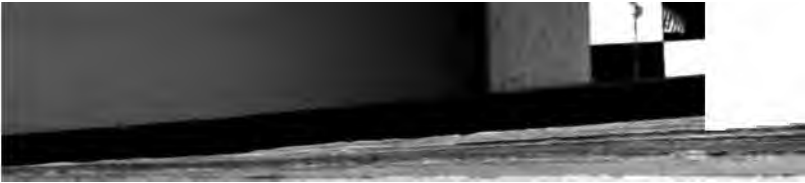




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EVIDENCES
OF THE
GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS.

VOLUME III.





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THE
EVIDENCES
OF THE
GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS.

By ANDREWS NORTON.

VOLUME III.

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CHAPTER VII.

ON THE SYSTEM OF THE Gnostics, AS INTENDED FOR A
SOLUTION OF THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL IN THE WORLD.

SECTION I.

*On their Opinion, that the World was formed by an
inferior Creator or Creators.*

THE view which we are now about to take of Gnosticism will lead us to consider it as a complicated, but inartificial, and wholly unsatisfactory attempt to solve the problem of the existence of evil in the creation. "The same subjects," says Tertullian, "are agitated by the heretics and by the philosophers. They are entangled in the same discussions: Whence is evil, and why does it exist? and Whence is man, and how was he formed? and the allied question of Valentinus, Whence is God?"* By

* De Præscript. Hæretic. c. 7. p. 204.

God, as here used in reference to the inquiry of Valentinus, is to be understood, not the Supreme Being, but the Maker of the World. In another passage, speaking of Marcion, he describes him as "diseased about the question, Whence is evil? as many," he adds, "especially the heretics, now are." He represents him as perverting the words of Christ, "A good tree produces good fruit, and a bad tree produces bad fruit"; interpreting the former clause as referring to the Supreme Being, and the latter to the Maker of the World. "Having his perceptions blunted by the very extravagance of his curiosity, finding the declaration of the Creator, 'I create evil,'* and having already presumed him to be the author of evil on the ground of those arguments which convince the ill-disposed, he has taught, in conformity to this, that the Creator is signified by the bad tree bearing bad fruit, that is to say, the evils which exist; and has presumed that there must be another God, answering to the good tree bearing good fruit."†

By the introduction of Christianity a new

* Isaiah xlv. 7.

† *Advers. Marcion. Lib. I. c. 2. p. 366. Conf. Origen. De Principiis, Lib. II. c. 5. § 4. Opp. I. 88.*



impulse was given to the minds of men, Heathens as well as Christians, to investigate the origin of evil. The question, Whence is evil? is called by Eusebius "that famous subject of discussion among the heretics";* but the discussions concerning it were far from being confined to them.

OF this problem the solution peculiar to the Gnostics was twofold. In its most general form, as held by the principal sects, especially by the Valentinians and the Marcionites, it may be thus stated. They taught, on the one hand, that the Creator was an inferior and imperfect being, and, on the other, that evil was inherent in matter. Imperfection and evil, therefore, were the necessary result of the defects both of the workman and of the material.

We will first attend to their opinions respecting the Creator. By the theosophic Gnostics he was regarded, not as self-existent, but as deriving his being mediately from God. The Marcionites, perhaps, held the same opinion; but we have no direct evidence that such was the fact. The Valentinians represented him as having been ignorant of the existence of the

* Hist. Eccles. Lib. V. c. 27.

Supreme Being before it was discovered to him by the coming of Christ, and as having supposed himself to be the only God.* It is not improbable that the Marcionites held a similar doctrine. The Valentinians believed, that, in the formation of beings, he wrought, though unconsciously, by suggestions from the Æon, called *Saviour* or *Jesus*; and to this Æon they ascribed such agency, that they regarded him as having, in a certain sense, given form to all things without the Pleroma.† The Marcionites ascribed to the Creator no similar direction from a higher power. By the Valentinians he was regarded as benevolent, and as rejoicing in the interposition of the Supreme Being by Christ, through which both himself and his creatures were to be exalted and blessed. They believed him to be still continued in the government of the world, and intrusted with a certain care of the Church.‡ They spoke of him as the God and Father of what is without the Pleroma, as an angel like

* Irenæus, Cont. Hæres. Lib. I. c. 5. § 4. p. 25. c. 7. § 4. p. 34; et alibi.

† Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 4. § 5. p. 22. c. 5. § 1. pp. 23, 24. c. 8. § 5. p. 42.

‡ Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 7. § 4. pp. 34, 35. c. 8. § 4. pp. 39, 40. Tertullian. Advers. Valentinianos, c. 28. p. 260.



to the Supreme God, and as formed in the image of the "Only Son," that is, of the first manifestation of the Deity.* The Basilidians appear to have held similar honorable conceptions of the Creator.† But the Marcionites, though they allowed him to be just,‡ represented him as a being to be feared rather than to be loved. They insisted more strongly than the theosophic Gnostics on the distinction, that he was "just," but not "good"; by which they meant, that he directly inflicted no evils on men except as penalties for sin, and conferred blessings as rewards for the performance of duty; but wanted the unmingled benevolence of the Supreme Being. Him they called good and not just, meaning, by denying him the latter attribute, that he inflicted no punishments. They proceeded still further in degrading the character of the Creator. They applied to him, as we have before seen, the words, "A bad tree produces bad fruit." From various passages of the Old Testament, correctly

* Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 5. §§ 1, 2. pp. 23, 24. Lib. III. c. 12. § 12. p. 198. Clement. Al. Stromat. IV. § 13. p. 603. Ptolemæi Epist. ad Floram, p. 361.

† Clement. Al. Stromat. II. § 8. p. 449.

‡ "Creator quem et Marcion justum facit." Tertulian. Advers. Marcion. Lib. IV. c. 33. p. 449.

or incorrectly understood, they derived very unfavorable conceptions of him.* They believed that the coming of Christ was intended

* In the *Dialogue de Rectâ Fide* (Sect. II. p. 826), the speaker, representing a Marcionite, is made to say, that "the Good God came through compassion for the soul of man, which he saw was under condemnation [that is, under condemnation from the Creator on account of sin]; and that the Creator plotted against him, and determined to crucify him, because he perceived that he was abrogating his laws." But the authority of the author of this *Dialogue* is not sufficient to establish the fact, that this doctrine was held by the earlier Marcionites concerning the Creator. Perhaps he may have had a ground for his representation in the language of some individual or individuals among those who called themselves Marcionites in the fourth century. Had the elder Marcionites held such a doctrine, Tertullian would have stated it expressly, and remarked upon it vehemently and at length; nor would the other early fathers, none of whom mentions it, have left us in any doubt on the subject. The representation contained in the *Dialogue* has, however, been repeated by some modern writers, as by Beausobre (*Hist. du Manichéisme*, II. 120), Mosheim (*Commentarii de Rebus Christ.* p. 407), and Walch (*Hist. der Ketzereien*, I. 511). — Mosheim (*Ibid.* p. 384) ascribes the same doctrine to the Valentinians, which is a greater error; for his statement is not only unsupported by any authority, but is directly contradictory to the testimony of the ancients, as it has been already alleged, p. 6.

A sentence of Tertullian (*Advers. Marcion. Lib. III. c. 23. p. 411*) has been referred to, as countenancing what is said by the author of the *Dialogue*. But it falls far short of asserting what he has stated. Had Marcion directly charged the Creator with procuring the destruction of Christ, Tertullian, as I have said, would not have left us to *infer* the fact from an indirect allusion to it in a single sentence.



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for the deliverance of the spiritually-minded from his reign, that they might be finally raised to a far higher state of glory than he could confer. But over all others they conceived that he still retained his authority, conferring rewards and punishments which extended to the future life. They regarded him as still the governor of this world (that is, of the material universe), and the peculiar god of the Jews, for whose redemption he was yet about to send *his* promised Messiah.*

OTHER opinions, still more derogatory to the Creator than those of the Marcionites, are reported to have been held by certain sects, heretical or pseudo-Christian. Those ascribed to the Ophians, the most remarkable among those sects, have been already mentioned. Ptolemy, in the beginning of his Letter to Flora, says, that "some affirm that the Law of Moses was ordained by the opposing and destroying demon, to whom, likewise, they assign the formation of the world." Of individuals holding such

* Tertullian. *Advers. Marcion*. Lib. IV. c. 6. p. 416. Tertullian often elsewhere refers to the doctrine of Marcion concerning a Jewish Messiah yet to come from the Creator; as, Lib. I. c. 15. p. 373. Lib. III. c. 6. p. 399. c. 23. pp. 410, 411. Lib. V. cc. 8, 9. p. 471. c. 16. p. 481.

opinions we nowhere else find any notice. It is not improbable that Ptolemy may have expressed himself very loosely, and have referred to such notions as were entertained, as we shall hereafter see, by at least one of the catholic fathers, Athenagoras, concerning the rule of Satan "over matter and the forms of matter," and may have brought them into connection with the doctrine of the Clementine Homilies, that a part of the Law proceeded from Satan,* and with that of the sectaries spoken of by Clement of Alexandria, who represented him as the author of the whole.† There is, however, no reason to doubt, that the opinions held by the Gnostics in general, and especially those of the Marcionites, led to extravagant and outrageous errors in some individuals. But how far any of those individuals had a title to be called Christians is uncertain. Their extravagances are a subject concerning which our information is very scanty and unsatisfactory. They attracted so little notice in their own time, that Clement of Alexandria tells us generally, that "there is no controversy, ... it is acknowledged by all, that the Creator is just." ‡

* See Vol. II. p. 249.

† See Vol. II. p. 132.

‡ *Pædagog.* Lib. I. c. 8. p. 141.



GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS. 11

WE have seen what were the general conceptions of the Gnostics respecting the Creator. The theosophic Gnostics associated with him other powers, subordinate to him, as agents in the government of the world. It is reported of some, as formerly mentioned, that they believed the world to have been made and governed by angels; but it is not improbable that this is a mere vague or incorrect account of a doctrine essentially the same with that of the Valentinians.*

THE theory of the Gnostics, in ascribing the creation and government of the world to an inferior being, is wholly foreign from our present belief. But it should not be brought into view, separate from all its connections, as something to be wondered at. It should be shown in its relations to the doctrines of their age, to the state of mankind then existing, and to the tendencies of human thought. One evident cause of its adoption appears in the Gnostic doctrines concerning the Jewish dispensation and the Old Testament. The Gnostics, admitting, in common with other Christians, that the Jewish dispensation proceeded from the

* See Vol. II. p. 38.

Creator and Ruler of the visible world, and being at the same time unable to reconcile the representations given of him in the Old Testament with their conceptions of the Supreme Being, were led to the conclusion that the Creator was an inferior god. But, in addition to this, their theory was in accordance with the philosophical speculations of their age. The current of opinion among the higher class of heathen philosophers set in the same direction. It was more or less coincident with doctrines that had been widely diffused, and which were adopted both by Jews and by catholic Christians. The supposition, that the Supreme Being had first directly interposed in human affairs, and had first made himself known to men, by his manifestation in Christ, agreed, in the view of the Gnostics, with the actual history of mankind, with the character of the Christian dispensation, and with express declarations of Christ. And strange as their theory of an inferior Creator may appear to us, there has been a tendency to similar speculations even among intelligent Christians of modern times.

These are topics which deserve some attention ; and the first that may be remarked upon is the state of the popular and the philosophical religion in that portion of the heathen world



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by which the Gnostics, as well as the catholic Christians, were surrounded.

IN the popular religion of the Greeks and Romans there was no recognition of God. Its heaven was a reflection of this earth. Its gods were formed after the model of human despots ; clothed indeed with more than mortal beauty and might, but having the same passions, the same gross vices, the same caprice, the same favoritism, and the same vindictiveness. Among those who rejected the popular superstitions, some, as the Epicureans, the sect of the wealthy, the powerful, and the worldly, virtually rejected, at the same time, all religious belief. The Stoics, the most devout of the more ancient sects, ascribed supreme divinity to the universe itself, which they regarded as a living being, or rather to the soul of the universe, the ethereal fire which they supposed to pervade and animate it ; but their piety consisted in their being devout polytheists, though not according to the gross conceptions of the vulgar. The ancient heathen philosophers, before the time of Christianity, regarded matter as uncreated ; it was a common opinion that the world, or universe, was without beginning ; and of those who recognized in it the agency of divine power, many

conceived of this power as having been in eternal union with matter. The world, in their view, was one complex, ever-existent being. This doctrine might glimmer into a dim recognition of the personality of the divine principle, but it as commonly sunk into pantheism, and vague polytheistic notions of superintending divinities, and of mysterious laws and relations, operating independently of the will of any superior being. Aristotle says, that most of those who first philosophized or theologized taught that matter was the only principle, or the first cause of all things that exist.* He himself conceived of God as a sort of all-powerful, incorporeal magnet, moving without volition the uncreated universe, a God absorbed in contemplation, supremely happy in himself, but destitute of all moral attributes exercised toward other beings. Between such a God and mankind there could be no moral connection ; and accordingly it has been observed that there is a general absence of religious sentiment from his writings. We find a remarkable passage in Plato, in which he introduces Socrates, on the day of his death, as describing his former perplexity in studying the causes

* Metaphysic. Lib. I. c. 3.



and nature of things, and then proceeding with his discourse thus : — “ But on hearing one read from a certain book (as he said, of Anaxagoras), that it is mind which orders all things, and is their cause, I was pleased with this cause, and it seemed to me to be in some respects a satisfactory supposition, that mind is the cause of all things.” * This doctrine Plato thus represents as new to Socrates ; whom he further describes as dissatisfied at finding that Anaxagoras, in the detail of his system, “ made,” as it is expressed, “ no use of mind ” ; but, as if he had not introduced this principle, explained effects by material causes.† In the

* Phædo, p. 97.

† Ibid. p. 98. — With Anaxagoras, Socrates during the earlier part of his life was contemporary. How little agency he gave to mind in the formation of the universe may appear from what Diogenes Laërtius says (Lib. II. c. 3. § 4), that he taught that “ animals were first produced from moisture, heat, and earthy matter ; and afterwards by generation.” He, however, is said to have been the first who represented mind as the disposer of matter in the ordering of the universe, and to have been celebrated on this account. (Diogenes Laert. II. 3. 1. Cicero de Nat. Deorum. Lib. I. § 11.) Yet Thales, long before him, is also said to have introduced the agency of mind. But Thales belongs to the fabulous age of Grecian philosophy, and an opinion of later date was not improbably ascribed to him. The contradiction concerning the respective claims of Thales and Anaxagoras, which appears in the ancient accounts of Grecian philosophy, and especially in Cicero (Ibid. §§ 10, 11), where the two opposite propositions almost

authentic exposition of the doctrines of Socrates given by Xenophon, the divine power and providence for which he contends are represented as residing in and exercised by the gods; though there are expressions which imply that he had a presentiment of the one God. To these expressions there is, I think, nothing corresponding in the language of Xenophon himself throughout his works. Plato, on the other hand, with little reasoning on the subject, and without any definite and connected explanation of his meaning, has imaginations concerning the Deity, which excite our surprise and admiration, when we compare them with the common notions of other Grecian philosophers before Christianity. In his writings, in those of Cicero, and in the half-poetical conceptions of a few other men of a high order of intellect, we here and there discover, amid the general darkness of those times, glorious, but very partial and obscure, glimpses of God.

But what is particularly to be remarked, as analogous to the views of the Gnostics, is, that the partial recognition of the Divinity in the

confront each other, — one, that the agency of mind was first taught by Anaxagoras, and the other, that this agency had been taught by Thales, — may, perhaps, be explained by the little credit which was given to the latter account.



mind of a heathen philosopher did not lead to such conceptions of his universal and immediate agency as Christianity has taught us to entertain. It was connected with the supposition, that the world was under the government of inferior gods. Plato was one of the most enlightened of heathen theists, the great theological philosopher of antiquity. But the Gnostic doctrine respecting the formation and government of the world by inferior agents may be traced back to his speculations. We find its germ in the cosmogony which he has left us in his "Timæus."

In this work, Plato represents the Supreme Ruler of All as giving birth to gods inferior to himself, celestial, animating the heavenly bodies and informing them with intelligence. Together with these, he speaks of the earth as the first and most ancient of the gods comprehended within the universe; and afterwards mentions the gods of the popular mythology, without clearly explaining his own opinion concerning them, but teaching that they are to be received as divine. He then describes the Supreme Being as thus addressing the newly formed gods:—"Now learn what I shall teach you. Three kinds of mortal animals are yet unpro-

duced.* Without the existence of these, the universe will be incomplete; for it will not contain every kind of living being; as it should do, in order to be perfect. But if these beings were formed and endued with life by me, they would equal the gods. In order, therefore, that mortal beings may exist, and that the universe may be a complete whole, do you, according to your nature, take upon yourselves the creation of animals, imitating my power exercised in your production. And as to that part in those animals [the intellectual part] which it is fit should be of like name with the immortals, being called *divine*, and which will rule those among them who are willing to be obedient to justice and to you, I will furnish this seed and make a beginning. For the rest, do you weave together the mortal with the immortal part, and fashion and give birth to animals, providing them with food for their increase, and receiving them again when they perish."

Plato, then, conformably to his doctrine of preëxistence, represents the Deity as forming at once all human souls, and committing them

* The three kinds, as enumerated before by Plato (*Timæus*, pp. 39, 40), are those which fly, those which dwell in the water, and those which walk the earth.



to the care of the inferior gods. They were distributed in equal portions to the stars, or, as he afterward says, some to the earth, some to the moon, and some to the other measurers of time, to be embodied in proper season. "He gave," says Plato, "to the newly created gods the office of forming mortal bodies, and what was further necessary to be conjoined with the human soul, of furnishing whatever is connected with these inferior parts of man, and of ruling and directing the mortal animal in the best manner, except so far as he may cause evil to himself." *

Plato, it appears, believed that the Supreme Being exercised no immediate government over the concerns of men. The Gnostics believed the same. Plato taught, that man, as he exists on earth, and the lower animals, with all the provision made for their wants, were the work of inferior powers. With this the doctrine of the Gnostics coincided. He supposed the immortal part of man to have been furnished by the Supreme Being; and the theosophic Gnostics, in like manner, taught that the spiritual principle in man, which alone was by nature immortal, was derived from the Pleroma.

* *Timæus*, pp. 30 - 42. *Conf.* p. 69.

It is unnecessary here to explain the vague, undetermined, dazzling conceptions of the Supreme Being which floated in misty light before the mind of Plato. As regards our present purpose, the point to be attended to is the impassable distance to which he removes him from the beings of this earth, and the interposition of inferior gods, as the immediate makers and governors of men, and the proper objects of their religious worship. He does not remark, that to Him no temples were raised, no prayers addressed, no devotion of the heart offered up. He was that Unknown God, whom St. Paul, three centuries after the death of the philosopher, first announced to the Athenians as the only God, who alone "made the world and all that it contains, and gave to all life and breath and all things."

In the tenth book of his "Laws," Plato defends earnestly the doctrine of a divine providence, nor has he written any thing of a more religious character. Here, as elsewhere in his writings, one benevolent being, the author of all good, sometimes breaks through the cloud ; * but the whole tenor of the discourse is to de-

* I refer particularly to what is said, p. 896, seqq., and pp. 903, 904.



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fend the existence, the providence, and the worship of the *gods*. In another part of the same work, after saying that the only way to obtain the friendship of *God* (to translate verbally), or (to express what I suppose the true meaning) the friendship of Divinity, — of what is Divine, — is to become like *God*, he says, that hence “follows a principle, the best and truest of all, that for a good man to offer sacrifices and to have intercourse with the gods [the word is here in the plural] by vows, and oblations, and every form of worship, is in the highest degree beautiful and good, most conducive to a happy life, and exceedingly proper; while the contrary of all this is true as regards a bad man.”* There was nothing, I think, incongruous with the theology either of Socrates or Plato in the belief of the former that he was under the guidance of a good *dæmon*; nor in his directing, just before his death, a cock to be sacrificed to *Æsculapius*, considered as the god who delivered men from the maladies of life; nor in the respect which his disciple Xenophon had for the heathen auguries and rites of worship.

In the work of Plato from which I have quoted † there are two other opinions that

* De Legibus, Lib. IV. p. 716.

† I hardly know whether, in thus quoting the “Laws,” it is

deserve notice in relation to our subject. One is, that he conceives that there are in the universe two souls, or principles of life, one good and the other evil.* To this we shall hereafter have occasion to refer. The other is, that here, as elsewhere, he regards the stars, and especially the bodies of our solar system, as animated or moved by gods who ruled over the earth.† With this I conceive that the doctrine of the theosophic Gnostics corresponded. They ascribed to the Creator six assistant angels, to whom together with him they assigned seven heavens or spheres, of which they were the informing spirits.‡ There can be little doubt that they regarded these spheres as those of the Sun, the Moon, and the five primary planets, besides the Earth, with which they were acquainted.

worth while to notice the skepticism of a modern German editor of Plato, Ast (*Platon's Leben und Schriften*, p. 384, seqq.), who denies to Plato the authorship of this work, which is ascribed to him by his disciple Aristotle. If it were not his work, there must have been another philosopher wholly unknown, another Plato, we may say, lost in obscurity, who as much deserved to be remembered as his contemporary whose name has spread over the world.

* *De Legibus*, Lib. X. p. 896.

† *De Legibus*, Lib. VII. pp. 821, 822. Lib. X. pp. 886, 898, 899. *Timæus*, pp. 39, 40.

‡ *Irenæus*, Lib. I. c. 5. § 2. p. 24.



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The doctrine, that the world is governed by powers inferior to the Supreme, appears throughout the writings of Plato. I will give one or two more examples. In that imperishable account which he has left of the last hours of Socrates, in which the striking sentiment forms such a contrast with the wretched reasoning, he represents the friends of that philosopher as inquiring, "How he could with so much ease leave them, and the gods whom he himself professed to be beneficent rulers." Amid the moral sublimity of this dialogue, we should hardly have been surprised, if Socrates had directly raised his mind to the one Supreme, and replied in such language as a Christian might use, that he was

"Safe in the hand of one disposing Power,
Or in the natal, or the mortal hour."

But the answer of the philosopher is different. It is sufficient for my purpose to give only its commencement:—"If I did not think that I was going in the first place to other gods wise and good, and then to men who have died better than those who are here, I should be wrong in not being distressed at the thought of death." *

* Phædo, p. 63. Conf. p. 69.

In the seventh book of his "Laws," Plato says:— "As regards what is in the highest sense divine, and the universal world,* it is affirmed [by the generality] that we must not busy ourselves in searching into the laws of their nature; for that this is unholy." By "what is in the highest sense divine," Plato apparently intends the Sun and the Moon, "the great gods," as he calls them, and the planets, to which in common with them he gives the name of "celestial gods." In opposition to the rule just alleged, he proceeds to state what he represents as facts concerning these divinities, very important even in their religious bearing, namely, that their apparent are not their real motions, but that they revolve in circles; and that those of them which seem to move most swiftly in fact move most slowly.

"It is difficult," says Plato, in a passage which at once throws a broad light over the whole subject, "to discover the Maker and Father of the universe, and impossible, when discovered, to speak of him to the generality." † Cicero in his version of this passage uses

* Τὸν μέγιστον θεὸν καὶ ὅλον τὸν κόσμον: verbally, "The greatest God and the whole world." p. 891.

† *Timæus*, p. 28.



stronger language, — “To point him out to the vulgar is forbidden.”* Cicero, himself, who in clearness of mind, good sense, and high moral sentiment, stands almost or altogether alone among the wise of ancient times, in his treatise “Concerning Laws,” suggested by that of Plato, enforces like him the worship of the *gods*. In discussing what he regarded as the fundamental doctrine of religion, it is “Of the Nature of the Gods” that he treats, and it is their providence which he represents the most religious as asserting. In the first part of the following sentence the Christian Lactantius may express himself too strongly, especially if he is to be understood as referring to the times before Christianity, but he does not express himself too strongly in its conclusion. “Though poets,” he says, “and philosophers, and even polytheists, often acknowledge the Supreme God, yet no one has ever entered into any inquiry or discussion concerning his worship or the honor due to him.”†

The philosophy of Plato, which, in recogniz-

* “Indicare in vulgus nefas.”

† “Sed tamen summum Deum, cum et philosophi, et poetæ, et ipsi denique qui deos colant, sæpe fateantur, de cultu tamen et honoribus ejus nemo unquam requisivit, nemo disseruit.” De Ira Dei, § 11.

ing a supreme Being as a glorious but indistinct vision, removed him at the same time from all superintendence of the concerns of men, and subjected these to the government of inferior gods, in the worship of whom all practical religion consisted, was the highest theology of ancient Greece and Rome before Christianity.* This theology was the basis of the theory common to the Gnostics. But they modified it by two leading conceptions which they derived from Christianity. Admitting the truth of both the Jewish and Gospel history, they maintained that the Unknown God had at last manifested himself to men through Christ, and had called them away from the worship of the ruler or rulers of this material universe ; and, conformably to the manner in which they received and interpreted the declarations of the Old Testament, they thought that its ruler or the chief among its rulers was the god of the Jews. There was a family likeness between the theology of the heathen philosophers and that of the Gnostics. But the catholic Christians, not-

* Respecting the theology of the ancient philosophers, one may further consult Leland's " Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation " (Part I. Ch. X - XVII.), — a work of uncommon trustworthiness and value.



withstanding some striking resemblances which we shall hereafter observe, were essentially separated from both. "We shall not," says Tertullian, "approximate to the opinions of Gentiles, who, if ever they are compelled to acknowledge God, introduce other gods below him." *

BUT the doctrine of a subordinate agency in the creation and government of the world was not confined to the heathen philosophers and the Gnostics. Before the time of the latter, it had passed into the theology of the Jews. The Jewish philosopher, Philo, in commenting upon the words, "Let us make man," repeatedly represents the Deity as addressing his Powers, and charging them with the formation of all that may tend to evil in the mind of man, because "he deemed it requisite to assign to other artificers the production of evil, reserving to himself alone the production of good." † In this hypothesis, Philo is not always consistent with himself; nor does it agree throughout with that of the Gnostics. But the rudiments of

* *Adversus Hermogenem*, c. 7. p. 235.

† *De Profugis*, Tom. I. p. 556. *De Mundi Opificio*. I. 17. *De Confusione Linguarum*. I. 431, seqq.

various Gnostic speculations exist in his writings ; and the transition was easy from his doctrine of subordinate ministers, introduced that God might not be considered as the author of evil, to the Gnostic doctrine of the Creator with his associates. He himself, as may be perceived from what has been before said, derived his doctrine from Plato.*

In the later Rabbis may be found the conception, that seventy angels ruled over, and were the gods of, the seventy nations into which the Gentile world was supposed to be divided ; while the Creator is represented as reserving the Israelites for himself, and is sometimes said to be their immediate governor, and sometimes to have appointed over them the archangel Michael as his vicegerent. The angels ruling the Gentiles are by some described as seventy angels who surround the throne of God and form his council ; by some, in accordance with a common belief of antiquity, as spirits animating planets and stars and governing through their influences ; and by some as evil spirits, the

* See before, pp. 17, 18. — I do not enlarge on the opinions of Philo in relation to the subject before us, as I have formerly explained them at some length in another work. See "Reasons for not believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians," Section X. p. 251, seqq.



idolatrous gods of the Gentiles, having for their chief Sammael, the angel of death, the same with Satan. It was supposed that the different nations prospered or suffered according to their rule; and that, when these nations were at war, their angels warred together likewise.* If these were merely the notions of the later Jews, they would not deserve notice in reference to our present subject; but similar conceptions prevailed among the Jews soon after their return from the Babylonish captivity. We find them in the book which they ascribed to Daniel, where the prince, that is, the angel, of Persia is represented as having withstood another angel, till Michael, who is spoken of as the angel of the Jews, came to his assistance; and where the prince, or angel of Greece is likewise mentioned.† These conceptions appear also in the false rendering given in the Septuagint of a passage in Deuteronomy: ‡ — “When the Most High divided to the nations their inheritance, when he separated the sons of Adam, he determined the boundaries of the nations according to the number of the children of Israel.” In-

* Eisenmengers *Entdecktes Judenthum*; i. e. *Judaism Unveiled*. Th. I. p. 803, seqq.

† Daniel x. 13, 20.

‡ Ch. xxxii. 8.

stead of the last clause, "according to the number of the children of Israel," the rendering of the Septuagint is, "according to the number of the angels."

THE doctrine of the Jews concerning the government of the heathen world by angels was adopted by many of the fathers, who appealed for proof of it to the passage in the Septuagint just mentioned, and to the representations in Daniel. It deserves notice, not as showing the coincidence, but the parallelism, of opinions, that Origen introduces this doctrine in opposition to an opinion advanced by Celsus, that the nations were each ruled by a power or powers, to whom it had been committed from the beginning, and whose peculiar laws and worship each was bound to maintain.* Respecting the character of these angels of the nations, the opinions of the fathers were unsettled, like those of the Jewish Rabbis. The prevailing conception of Origen appears to have been, that, though appointed by God to their office, they had become degenerate and bad; and that, when Christ was manifested, their dread of losing their rule made them enemies

* Cont. Celsum, Lib. V. §§ 25, 26. Opp. I. 596, seqq.



of him and his followers.* Regarding the heathen world as subject to them, he expresses himself concerning the coming of Christ in such language as might have been used by the Gnostics: — “As, then, the princes of this world [the angels ruling this world] had seized on the portion of the Lord, it was necessary for the good Shepherd, leaving the ninety-nine in heaven, to descend to earth, that he might find and bear away on his shoulders the sheep that was lost, and bring it back to the fold of perfection above.”† The conception of Christ’s leaving ninety-nine of his flock in heaven, and of his bearing back thither the sheep that was lost, is founded on doctrines which Origen derived from Plato. Following Plato, Origen believed in the preëxistence of souls, and that those souls that were here embodied had fallen from a higher state. The theosophic Gnostics, likewise, believed that the spiritual principle, so far as it existed in men, or, in other words, *the spirits* of men, had fallen from the Pleroma, and that the Saviour had come to deliver what was

* De Principiis, Lib. III. c. 3. Opp. I. 143. Homil. in Genesin, IX. § 3. Opp. II. 85, 86. Comment. in Epist. ad Romanos. Lib. VIII. § 12. Opp. IV. 639.

† Homil. IX. in Genesin, ubi sup.

spiritual from its connection with matter, and to restore it to its original seat. Some of them, it may seem from what is said by Irenæus, applied the parable of the lost sheep in much the same manner as it was used by Origen.*

PARALLEL with the doctrine concerning the government of the heathen world by angels was another concerning the gods of the Heathens; but the bearing of the two upon each other does not appear to have been so defined as to make it possible to adjust them together into one connected and consistent scheme. "The Gentiles," says St. Paul, "offer their sacrifices to dæmons, and not to God";† and there is no doubt that the word "dæmon" is used by the Apostle in a bad sense. Accordingly, the fathers regarded the gods of the pagan mythology as evil dæmons, ministers of Satan. Him they conceived of as ruling over them and their pagan worshippers. In the view of the fathers, those gods were impure spirits, burdened with material vehicles, and inhaling for their nourishment the fumes of incense and sacrifices. Whatever marvels in the pagan religion were

* Cont. Hæres. Lib. I. c. 8. § 4. p. 39. c. 16. § 1. p. 80.

† 1 Corinthians x. 20.



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not the work of human fraud, whatever was really supernatural in oracles, omens, and appearances of the gods, was to be ascribed to them. They were deadly enemies of Christianity, through which their worship was to be done away, and were continually exciting their worshippers to persecute and destroy the Christians. The pagan world was, in a certain sense, the realm of Satan. These conceptions have been adopted, and made familiar to modern readers, by the great poet of Christian mythology, who describes the fallen angels as becoming

“known to men by various names,
And various idols, through the heathen world.”

THE doctrine concerning the rule of Satan over the world finally assumed a form among catholic Christians, in which it may be compared with the most unfavorable representations that have been given of Gnosticism, and in which it is not distinguished by any characteristic that may recommend it from what was regarded as the odious heresy of the Manichæans. Even so early as the second century, the lineaments of that belief on this subject which afterwards prevailed are distinctly traced in a passage of Athenagoras. According to Athe-

nagoras, Satan was originally created an angel of light, and intrusted by God with the administration of matter and the forms of matter. This ruler over matter, and the other angels who rule over the affairs of this first "firmament," fell into sin through the abuse of their moral liberty. Satan became an enemy of God; and his administration is opposite to the goodness of God. Hence, he says, the poet Euripides doubted whether there was any divine providence over the concerns of men, and the philosopher Aristotle denied its existence. According to Athenagoras himself, the providence of God regulates the general order of the universe, but "men are moved and carried in different directions according to the nature of each, and the operations of that ruler who is over them, and of his associate demons," who excite in men irregular desires conformable to their own natures.*

Thus, instead of the Gnostic Creator, Athenagoras subjected men to the government of Satan, whom he viewed as the ruler of matter. This was his solution of the existence of evil. The doctrine was remotely derived from the

* Athenagoræ Legatio pro Christianis, pp. 302-304. Ed. Benedict.



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Persian theology, into which it had been introduced to solve the same difficulty. We will briefly trace its history ; for in different forms it entered both into the theology of the orthodox church and the heresies of the Gnostics and the Manichæans.

Our sources of information respecting the Persian theology, including the collection of writings entitled the *Zend-Avesta*, are of such uncertain credit, and so imperfect and contradictory, that we can speak with but little confidence of its history or vicissitudes, or of the detail of any particular system in which it appeared. But notwithstanding the cloud which has spread over it, some remarkable characteristics are to be obscurely discerned. The Persian sages appear from an early period to have held in some form or other the belief of one supreme beneficent Being. But they regarded the universe as divided into two opposite empires, the empire of light and the empire of darkness. The former was conceived of as the region of pure and happy beings, over whom reigned the beneficent God, Ormuzd. The latter was the domain of evil, peopled with malignant demons under the rule of Ahriman. This world was conceived of as being on the confines of these two empires, the result of their

commingling and strife, the seat of their warfare, a region where the beneficent God and the Prince of Evil held divided sway. Hence it is, to use words that express the doctrine as truly as would the simplest prose, that

“ the same earth
Bears fruit and poison ; where the camel finds
His fragrant food, the horned viper there
Sucks in the juice of death : the elements
Now serve the use of man, and now assert
Dominion o’er his weakness : dost thou hear
The sound of merriment and nuptial song ?
From the next house proceeds the mourner’s cry,
Lamenting o’er the dead.”

The Persian doctrine implies but a very imperfect conception of the omnipotence of God. But the same remark may be made of every other ancient system of theology, excepting the Christian. Nor is it probable that the generality of ancient Christians entertained any adequate ideas of this divine attribute. These are facts which it is necessary to bear in mind in studying the theological speculations of the ancients, which may otherwise appear to us even more incongruous than they were.

Manes, or Manichæus, who was a Persian, blended with Christianity the theology of his country ; and thus, in the latter half of the third century, became the founder of the sect of the Manichæans. In common with the Gnos-



tics, and other framers of religious systems, it was a main purpose with him to account for the origin of evil. Ahriman was, in his system, easily converted into Satan; and according to him, evil had its origin in eternal matter necessarily existing, and the demons resident in it and ruling over it, of whom Satan was the chief. They had made an incursion into the spiritual world, and, seizing upon a portion of spirit, had mingled it with matter and founded this world. To redeem this portion of spirit from its enthrallment was the purpose of the interposition of God by Christ, and by Manes himself, who was Christ's successor, and the perfecter of his work.

From the Ahriman of the Persians, the Jews, long before the time of Manes, probably derived their conception of Satan, the *Adversary* of God and man. Their notions concerning him were, however, modified by their belief of the supremacy of God, so that they regarded him as always under God's control. But he and his ministers were popularly conceived of by them, as causing the moral and physical disorders in the world, as tempting men to sin, and vexing them with diseases. From the Jews this conception passed into the theology of Christians. Our Saviour in his discourses

used forms of speech founded upon these notions of his countrymen. It was his purpose to give his hearers a more vivid impression of the evil of certain acts and states of character by thus figuratively referring them to Satan as their source, and associating them with his hateful and terrific image. The same use of language likewise occurs in the writings of the Apostles; and though they nowhere teach the popular doctrine as a doctrine of religion, yet it is not probable that the mind of any one of them was wholly unaffected by it. When, accordingly, this belief concerning Satan began to prevail among Christians, every thing in the New Testament which appeared to favor it was interpreted literally, and made a ground for further inferences. We have seen the form which it had early assumed in the writings of Athenagoras; but the ghastly phantom which he presents as ruling over the world afterwards dilated its terrors; *

"Horribili super adspectu mortalibus instans."

* Dr. Thomas Burnet is a writer not likely to be charged with fanaticism or superstition. One may, therefore, be somewhat surprised at meeting with a passage in his posthumous work, "*De Fide et Officiis Christianorum*" (p. 70), of which the following is a translation. "The Gentiles appear to have given themselves up to the dominion of evil spirits, who by the permission of God



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Far the greater part of men, according to the creeds of those days, were born, and ever continued to be, "bond slaves of Satan"; and the remainder were constantly suffering from his assaults and machinations.

The doctrine of Athenagoras, which subjected the world to the rule of Satan, is more objectionable than the Gnostic doctrine, which subjected it to the rule of the Creator. But many or most of the Gnostics, as we shall again have occasion to observe, appear likewise to have introduced Satan, or the animate principle of

had obtained the empire of this world. To this their chief laid claim, when, having shown to Christ all the kingdoms of the world and their glory, he said to him, Luke iv. 6, *I will give thee power over the whole and the glory of those kingdoms, for it is committed to me, and I give it to whom I will.* We know that the Devil is a deceiver; but Christ himself also repeatedly calls him the Prince of this world, John xii. 31; xiv. 30; xvi. 11. Whatever was his right or title, he seems at that time to have had possession of the world; and, God being as it were excluded, the ordering of affairs was at the pleasure of demons." The philosophy of Athenagoras, it appears, had survived in full vigor to the eighteenth century. The errors of the ancient fathers and the ancient heretics, which were adopted for the purpose, however unskillfully executed, of vindicating the goodness of God, and which were countenanced and supported by the philosophy of the age, are to be differently regarded from the corresponding errors of later times, some of which now stand insulated amid the intellectual and moral improvement of the world.

evil resident in matter, as the adversary of the Creator and his works.

IN looking to a very different part of the catholic system of faith, we find another analogy between the doctrine of the Gnostics and that of the early Christian fathers, which is remarked upon by Origen himself. Origen says, that the distinction made by the heretics, in affirming that the Creator is just, and the Father of Christ good, may, in his opinion, when accurately understood, be said of the Father and the Son. The Son is just; he has received authority to judge the world righteously. Men are here prepared by the various discipline which he appoints in justice for the time when he will deliver up his kingdom, when God, being all in all, will display his goodness toward those who have been disciplined by his Son; and perhaps *all* things, Origen adds, may be thus prepared for its reception. Christ himself has said that the Father alone is good. In like manner, Origen thinks that a true sense may be given to the proposition, that there is one superior to the Creator, Christ being regarded as the Creator; for the Father is greater than he.*

* Comment. in Joan. Tom. I. § 40. Opp. IV. 41.



All those Christians of the first three centuries who conceived of the Logos as a person believed like the Gnostics in a Creator of the universe inferior to the Supreme Being ; for they referred its creation immediately to the Logos. It is only in this point, however, that there is any analogy between the Logos of the ancient fathers and the Creator of the Gnostics. In other respects the Logos corresponds rather to the first manifestation or development of the Deity in the Gnostic system of *Æons*.

Thus, on every side, we perceive an approximation to the doctrine of the Gnostics respecting the creation and government of the world by a being or beings inferior to the Supreme. We may suppose that they came to the study of Christianity prepossessed with the philosophical doctrine, that human affairs were under the government of inferior gods, the Supreme Divinity being far removed from their superintendence. Looking back upon the state of mankind, they saw, on the one hand, that the Father of All, as revealed by Christianity, had been an unknown God to the Gentile world. On the other hand, the gross and limited conceptions which the generality of the Jews entertained of God, under the name of *Jehovah*,

and even the representations of the Old Testament concerning him, seemed to them to relate to a being far inferior to that God whom Christ had made known. They were thus led to the conclusion, that the Father of All had first revealed himself to men by Christ, and through him had first interposed to deliver all that was spiritual and pure in the universe from the thralldom of matter. Their doctrine might seem to them but little more than the declaration of an historical fact, that the true God was unknown to men before he was revealed by Christ.

IN almost every age, wherever the belief of one Supreme Being has been received, imperfect notions of his nature and moral government, and the observation of the defects, irregularities, and evils, real or apparent, which exist in the present state of things, have led to conceptions more or less correspondent to those of the Gnostics. Some other being or beings have been interposed between God and his creatures, as having an immediate control over the physical or moral world. To the causes mentioned we may refer the famous doctrine of the very learned Cudworth concerning the unconscious soul of the world, Plastic



Nature, as he denominates it, a being to the immediate agency of which he refers all physical changes ; and which he describes, in language not altogether intelligible, as “a creature incorporeal, though low and imperfect,” but “an energetic and effectual principle, moving matter by some energy of its own,” “acting for ends artificially, yet neither intending those ends, nor understanding the reason of what it does, and therefore unable to act electively,” “the Divine Art concrete, and embodied in matter,” “the manuary opificer of the Divine understanding.” The reasons which Cudworth assigns for introducing this agent might have been adopted with little variation by the Gnostics in defence of their doctrine of an imperfect Creator. They are, because it seems “not decorous in respect to God, nor agreeable to reason, that he himself should do all things immediately and miraculously,” for this “would render Divine Providence operose, solicitous, and distractious” ; because the supposition is inconsistent “with the slow and gradual progress of things in nature” ; whereas, if the agent were omnipotent, the end proposed would be effected at once, without what would seem “this vain and idle pomp” ; and, further, because the supposition is incon-

sistent "with those errors and bungles that are committed, when the matter is inept and contumacious, which argue the agent not to be irresistible."*

This theory was not only maintained by Cudworth, but countenanced and defended as not improbable by Le Clerc, a man extraordinarily free from mysticism and extravagance, whose intellectual vigor has preserved his writings to our own time in almost their original freshness. Even at the present day we are hardly disembarassed from the conception of Nature, not as a poetical personification, but as a real agent; and there are but few, perhaps, who habitually recognize in the operations of the physical world only an uninterrupted display of God's power in immediate action. We are hardly yet familiar with the belief, that it is God alone who

" Warms in the sun, refreshes in the breeze,
Glowe in the stars, and blossoms in the trees ;

Breathes in our soul, informs our mortal part,
As full, as perfect, in a hair as heart ;
As full, as perfect, in vile man that mourns,
As the rapt seraph that adores and burns."†

* Intellectual System of the Universe, p. 150, seqq.

† The concluding lines are to be understood as meaning



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It may readily be supposed that the catholic Christians found no difficulty in confuting the theory of the Gnostics respecting an inferior Creator or Creators. The following is a summary of the reasoning of Irenæus. If it be said that the world was made either by angels or by any inferior being, without the will of God, it must be supposed that the angels are more powerful than God, or that he is indifferent to what takes place. It would be idle to conceive of the world as thus formed within his realm, where he is present; and if formed without it, his being is circumscribed and he ceases to be infinite. This argument might seem trifling, if the theosophic Gnostics had not placed the material world without the Pleroma, the complete development of God, and thus afforded sufficient occasion for it. One other is added by Irenæus. If the world, he says, exists conformably to the will, and with the knowledge, of God, he is properly its maker, whoever might be the immediate agents in its formation. Those agents

that a hair and a heart, a man and an angel, are all equally produced and preserved in being by Divine power, by power full and perfect; and that no one of them is the work of any agent inferior to God.

derived their being from him, and are to be considered only as instruments in his hands.* — The very obviousness and simplicity of these arguments throw light on the state of opinion and reasoning to which men had advanced in the age of Irenæus.

BUT the Gnostics, on the other hand, were not wanting in arguments to support their doctrine of a subordinate Creator and an Unknown God. We have seen how correspondent this doctrine was to opinions universally prevalent both among Heathens and Christians. The Gnostics conceived that the history of the world made it evident that the True God had been unknown to men till he was revealed by Christ. They dwelt upon the representations of the Divinity in the Old Testament, to prove that the God of the Jews could not be the True God, the God of Christians; while, at the same time, admitting the authority of the Old Testament, they recognized his claim to be the Creator of the material universe. They argued from the imperfections and evils of the world, that it could not be the work of a good and omnip-

* Cont. Hæres. Lib. II. c. 2. p. 117.



otent Being, but bore evident marks of an imperfect maker. And they found, as they thought, full confirmation of their doctrine in the words of Christ, — “No man knoweth the Father but the Son, and he to whom the Son may reveal him.” These words, which they often quoted, they considered as affording unequivocal proof that Christ came to reveal an Unknown God.* They alleged, also, other passages to the same effect. Thus, they quoted what is said by John in his Gospel, “No one has seen God at any time,” as proving that the God revealed by Christ was not the god who had been seen by Moses and the patriarchs.† And they appealed to our Lord’s declaration to the Jews, “Ye know neither me nor my Father,” as evincing that the god known to the Jews was not *his* Father.‡

WE have thus attended to one of the causes

* Among the many passages in which this argument of the Gnostics is noticed, it may be sufficient to refer to Irenæus, *Cont. Hæres. Lib. I. c. 20. § 3. p. 93. Lib. IV. c. 6. § 1. p. 233*, and to Tertullian, *Advers. Marcionem, Lib. IV. c. 25. p. 441*.

† Origen. *De Principiis, Lib. II. c. 4. § 3. Opp. I. 85*.

‡ Origen. *Comment. in Joan. Tom. XIX. Opp. IV. 283*.

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which the Gnostics assigned for the evils in the world, — the imperfection of its immediate maker, or makers. We have next to consider their opinions respecting the evil nature of matter.



CHAPTER VII.

(CONTINUED.)

ON THE SYSTEM OF THE GNOSTICS, AS INTENDED FOR A
SOLUTION OF THE EXISTENCE OF EVIL IN THE WORLD.

SECTION II.

On their Opinions concerning Evil, as inherent in Matter.

“THE Marcionites believe,” says Clement of Alexandria, “that nature is bad, as proceeding from evil matter and a just Maker”;* that is, a Maker who is only just. Such was the belief of the Gnostics in general. But there was nothing peculiar to them in their opinion that evil inheres in matter, nor in their application of this doctrine to account for the evils in the world. The theory had been common long before their time. It was connected with the general doctrine of ancient heathen philosophy concerning the independent existence of matter.

* Stromat. III. § 3. p. 515.

Until the period when Christianity taught men to form a new idea of the power of God, as able to cause that to be which did not before exist, matter was regarded by the ancient philosophers as uncreated and eternal. In the view of Plato it was not the product of divine power, but (to use the language of Cudworth) *the inept and contumacious material* on which that power was exercised. In his dialogue entitled "The Statesman," there is a long and strange passage concerning the revolutions of the world, caused by the refractory tendencies in matter during intervals in which the divine power that controls those tendencies is suspended.* He describes the world as, after one of these revolutions, fulfilling its appointed laws, at first accurately, but afterward more dully and negligently. "And the cause of this," he says, "is the bodily part

* Politicus, p. 269, seqq. One of the most respectable of the German writers on Plato, Socher, contends, I think on very insufficient grounds, that this Dialogue is not the work of Plato. (Ueber Platon's Schriften, p. 273, seqq.) There is, however, no dispute that the Dialogue is of the age of Plato, for it is quoted by Aristotle; nor that it was generally reputed to be his work. The question of its genuineness, therefore, is unimportant, so far as it is adduced only to show the antiquity of the doctrine of evil in matter, and that this doctrine was supported by the authority of Plato's name.



of its composition, inherent of old in its nature ; for this, being full of disorder before it entered into the composition of the world, received all that it has good from him who compounded it ; but whatever is bad and wrong in the universe proceeds from it, and is produced by it in living beings, in consequence of its former tendencies." * In his *Timæus* he represents God as taking matter,† which was in discordant and disorderly motion, and reducing it from disorder to order ; "it being his will that all things should be good, and, as far as might be, nothing bad" ; ‡ and in the same dialogue he presents the conception of *necessity*,§ by which he apparently intends what necessarily exists in matter, as controlled by the power of the Deity.|| In his *Laws*, the work of his old age, there is a remarkable passage, before referred to,¶ in which he teaches that there are at least two souls (or principles of motion) pervading the

* *Politicus*, p. 273.

† "Matter" ; the expression of Plato is *πάν ὃσον ἦν ὁρατόν*, "whatever was visible." It is a remarkable fact, forcibly illustrating the state of philosophy in Plato's time, that neither the word *ὕλη* in the sense of "matter," nor any other word appropriate to the expression of that idea, occurs in his writings. — See Additional Note, A.

‡ *Timæus*, p. 30.

§ *Ἀνάγκη*.

|| *Timæus*, pp. 48, 56.

¶ See before, pp. 21, 22.

universe, one beneficent, and the other of an opposite character.* There is here no direct mention of matter; but the passage was understood by Plutarch, and by others of the later admirers and expositors of Plato, as referring to a soul without intellect, resident in matter, and producing its disorderly motion while in its unformed state. This Plutarch regarded as the principle of evil in the universe; and the existence of some such principle, he says, had been affirmed by the greater part of preceding theologians and philosophers.†

During the second and third centuries, the doctrine, that matter, having an independent existence, is the source of evil, attracted attention among Christians; and treatises were written in opposition to it. It was generally rejected by the catholic Christians, who believed matter to have been created by God. It was, however, maintained by Hermogenes, who was not a Gnostic, and against whom Tertullian wrote a treatise, still extant. Arnobius, likewise, who wrote about the beginning of the fourth century, asks the ques-

* De Legibus, p. 896.

† The passages from Plutarch relating to this subject may be found collected by Cudworth and Mosheim in the *Systema Intellectuale a Mosheim*. Tom. I. p. 299, seqq.

tion, — “What if primitive matter (*prima materies*), which has been disposed into the four elements, contain the causes of all miseries?” * though this appears not to have been his own opinion.

THAT the body is the antagonist principle of evil in man is a natural branch of the doctrine that matter is the antagonist principle of evil in the universe. But the former opinion subsisted unconnected with the latter, or connected but loosely and obscurely. By the Gnostics it was adopted in its whole extent. But it was no novel doctrine.

Plato taught, as we have already seen, that the body was not the original residence of the soul.† Through the appointment of God, or from necessity, or in consequence of its own fault or its intrinsic weakness (for he is not consistent with himself in his representations), it had been removed, or had fallen, from its first estate, and become immersed and entangled in matter.‡ The philosophical doctrine of the immortality of the soul, widely different from the Christian, was connected with the belief of its preëxistence either through the past duration of

* *Advers. Gentes*, Lib. I. p. 6. Ed. Thysii. 1651.

† See before, pp. 17, 18.

‡ *Timæus*, p. 41, seqq. *Phædrus*, p. 246, seqq.

the universe, or from eternity, and of its having undergone many changes of being, and re-appeared on earth in many different forms. According to Plato, the soul, being confined within the body, is in consequence subjected to the violent affections connected with the senses, to desire mingled with pleasure and pain, and to fear and anger. Its perceptions are darkened, and its powers enthralled. It is surrounded by a world of delusion; and all its true knowledge consists in the reminiscences of the Ideas with which it was conversant in a higher state of existence, reminiscences awakened by the imperfect resemblances of those Ideas which material things present. Plato, accordingly, describes it as the highest purpose of philosophy to loosen the connection by which the soul is bound and agglutinated within the body, to withdraw it from the senses, except so far as we are by necessity compelled to use them, to enable it to be alone, collected within itself, and thus to free it, as far as possible, from pleasures and desires, and sorrows and fears, and by the exercise of all virtue to prepare it for a return to the life of the gods.*

* *Timæus*, p. 42, seqq., p. 69. *Phædrus*, pp. 249, 250. *Phædo*, p. 64, seqq., p. 72, seqq., p. 81, seqq.



The doctrine, that the body is the great source of moral evil, was common in ancient times. Philo, the Jewish philosopher, adopted on this subject the conceptions and language of Plato. He speaks of the body as a corpse which we bear about with us, as evil by nature and laying snares for the soul, as a sepulchre in which the soul is entombed, and as a prison full of pollution, from which it must free itself. Every virtue, he says, loves the soul; every vice, the body; what is in friendship with one is at enmity with the other. Virtues and virtuous deeds are perfect and blameless sacrifices which the body abhors.*

This common sentiment of antiquity appears in the writings of St. Paul. "I know," he says, "that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwells nothing good."† He regarded those as left to the influences of the flesh, who were without the spiritual principle to be derived from Christianity. The law in the members, says the Apostle, warring against the law of the mind, brings men into subjection to the law of sin

* *Legum Allegoriæ*, Lib. III. Opp. I. 100, 101. *De Creatione Principum*, II. 367. *De Migratione Abrahami*, I. 437. *Quis Rerum Divinarum Hæres*, I. 507. *De Profugis*, I. 548.

† *Romans vii.* 18.

which is in the members.* There are passages in which his meaning is likely to be misunderstood, from the comparatively limited sense in which the word *flesh* has been metaphorically used in modern times, as denoting only the irregular appetites. He, on the other hand, according to the philosophy of his age, considers the flesh as the source of moral evil in general. Thus he enumerates among the works of the flesh, "idolatry, magical arts, enmities, quarrels, passion, anger, strife, divisions, parties, hatred, murder."† Those who have become Christians, he says, have "put off this body of flesh."‡

THE conceptions which were thus generally entertained have an obvious foundation in the nature of man. The appetites, by indulging in which the soul "embodies and embrutes," are to be referred to our material part. The diseases which the flesh is heir to disorder the affections and temper, fill the mind with phantoms of misery, disturb the judgment, and sometimes lay waste the intellect; and in our best

* Romans vii. 23.

† Galatians v. 20, 21.

‡ Colossians ii. 11. — I omit τῶν ἀμαρτιῶν (*of the sins*), with Griesbach and others.



estate, "the corruptible body weighs down the soul, and the earthly tabernacle burdens the mind full of many thoughts." Still, the body is not the sepulchre, but the cradle, of the soul. It is a necessary condition of the present life, of this school of discipline and instruction which Divine Wisdom has prepared for us at the commencement of our being, and in which our powers of action, our capacities of enjoyment, and the objects around us, are so adjusted to each other as to promote the moral growth of the newly formed inhabitant of the universe. In a philosophical view, the body is not a clog upon the mind; it may rather be compared to the weight which gives motion to a piece of machinery; for its wants and desires are what first rouse the mind to action, and gradually bring into exercise its highest powers and best affections. If we cannot call the appetites the germ of our virtues, yet they may almost be considered as the soil in which our virtues take root. From them spring industry and forethought, which, as regards the greater part of men, are exercised most strenuously in supplying their demands; and they call into exercise self-control, the first requisite in our moral discipline. The relation between the sexes becomes the source of the most disinterested love, and of all

the domestic charities. And it is in witnessing the bodily wants and sufferings of our fellow-creatures that compassion and benevolence are first awakened.

It is remarkable that the conception of the evil nature of the body, though recommended by such authority, and though it subsequently had an essential influence in strengthening the ascetic system of morality among Christians, does not appear to have found much favor with the early fathers, any more than the doctrine of an evil principle in matter. Even Clement of Alexandria, whom we should suppose likely, as much as any one, to have been influenced by the Platonic philosophy, expressly contends that "neither the soul is good, nor the body bad, by nature." *

THE Gnostics, adopting the common doctrine of their age concerning the evil nature of the body, were further distinguished from the catholic Christians by some of the inferences which they drew from it. A portion of them made it a ground for strict asceticism and abstinence

* Stromat. Lib. IV. § 26. p. 639. Conf. Lib. III. § 11. p. 545. § 16. p. 559.



from all the pleasures of sense. Some, on the other hand, conformably to what has been before stated,* are said to have found in it a license for criminal indulgence. They pretended that the vile body was so apart from the spirit, that the latter could not be contaminated by the affections of the former. With many Gnostics it was probably not more operative in its practical influence, than with the majority of other individuals by whom it was held. But it led them generally to the belief that Christ had not a proper human body of flesh and blood. It also caused them to deny "the resurrection of the body." The question concerning this subject was one of those most strongly contested between the Gnostics and the catholic Christians, however uninteresting the debate may appear to a philosopher of the present day.

IN connection with the notions of the Gnostics concerning the causes of evil, it remains to speak of their opinions relating to the Devil. But our direct and credible information on this subject is scanty. The conception of him as a personal agent does not appear to have been

* See Vol. II. pp. 126, 127 ; p. 130, seqq.

essential to their system. The notices still remaining which they themselves gave of their opinions are inconsistent with the representations of the fathers. A comparison of them together may serve to show with what distrust we should regard the accounts of the fathers, even those of the best authority, when they are not dwelt upon and explained at length, or confirmed by their intrinsic probability, or by their consistency with what is known of the system of the Gnostics, or by collateral evidence. It thus illustrates the impracticability, which for the most part exists, of pursuing our inquiries respecting the doctrines of the Gnostics upon any safe grounds, when those inquiries extend beyond the great, characteristic features of their belief.

Irenæus, in his account of the Ptolemæo-Valentinian theory,* says, that, according to Ptolemy, the Devil was formed by the Creator, that he was called *Cosmocrator*, or the Ruler of the World, having his seat in this lower world, and that, being the *Spirit* of Evil (that is, his nature being *spiritual*), he knew the things above him (he was aware of the existence of the spiritual world, the Pleroma);

* See Vol. II. p. 89.



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but that the Creator, not being spiritual, did not know of their existence.* In this account Irenæus is followed by Tertullian† and other later writers.

But the account is irreconcilable with that which Ptolemy himself gives of his opinions in his Letter to Flora. He there says:—“ There is one unoriginated Father, from whom properly all things are; for the chain of being depends from him. The essence of the Adversary is destruction and darkness; *for he is material* and multiplex. But the essence of the unoriginated Father of All is incorruption, and light itself pure and uniform. The essence of these two produced a certain twofold power [the Creator].‡ But he is the image of the Better.”

Here we find the Devil, or the principle of evil in the universe, described, not as spiritual (conformably to the account of Irenæus), but as material, and not as produced by the Creator (a statement in itself sufficiently improbable), but as in some way contributing to his production; — the idea of Ptolemy, I conceive, being,

* Cont. Hæres. Lib. I. c. 5. § 4. p. 26.

† Adversus Valentiniānos, c. 22. p. 259.

‡ Ἡ δὲ τούτων οὐσία διττὴν μὲν τινα δύναμιν προήγαγεν.

that matter entered into the composition of the Creator. Ptolemy goes on to exhort Flora not to be troubled by the question, How, when there is one good Being, the principle of all things, whose nature it is to make all things like himself, these two other powers should exist, one whose essence is destruction, and the other possessing a middle nature. But, unfortunately, we have not his answer to this question. He promises to give, at some future time, a solution of it, grounded on the apostolic tradition which had come down to the Gnostics, and confirmed throughout by the teaching of the Saviour.*

From this passage we may judge that Ptolemy, adopting the conception of Plato, Plutarch, and other philosophers, respecting the material soul, or the animate principle of evil in matter, which is at war with order and stability, regarded this principle as the Adversary, the Devil. Such, from all that we can learn concerning the subject, appears to have been the doctrine of the Valentinians. They divided men into three classes, — the spiritual, the animal and rational,† and the earthy. The last, according to Heracleon, were of the same sub-

* Epist. ad Floram, p. 361.

† Οἱ ψυχικοί.



stance with the Devil; whom he was so far from considering as spiritual, that he denied him the power of will, saying that he had only desires.* The same notion of the materiality of the Devil appears in the *Doctrina Orientalis*.† And, what is remarkable, Irenæus is as inconsistent with himself as with the Gnostic writers who have been quoted. For, immediately before the passage that has been adduced from him, he says that the Valentinians taught that the Devil and the evil demons had their origin from a substance which, according to his own account, the Valentinians considered as one form of matter.‡

It is probable that what thus appears to have been the doctrine of the Valentinians, namely, that the Devil was the animate principle of evil in matter, was also the doctrine of the Basilidians and the Marcionites. Of Marcion Tertullian says, that, “imputing un-

* Apud Origen. Comment. in Joan. XX. § 20. Opp. IV. 337–339.

† *Doctrina Orientalis*, § 48. §§ 52, 53. § 34. Conf. Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 6. § 1. p. 28.

‡ Ἐκ δὲ τῆς λύπης — τὴν γένεσιν ἐσχηκέναι. Lib. I. c. 5. § 4. p. 26. For the meaning of ἐκ τῆς λύπης see what immediately precedes in the same section, p. 25, and Irenæus's whole account of the notions of the Valentinians concerning the *formation* of matter in the fourth and fifth chapters of his first Book.

originated, unmade, eternal evil to unoriginated, unmade, eternal matter, he has thus made a god of evil." * The only question in regard to him or Basilides is, Whether they ascribed a personal, or an animate, existence to the principle of evil. This question, as far as regards Marcion, would be determined in the affirmative, if we could trust to the accounts of the writers of the fourth and fifth centuries.

What is certain in regard to the Gnostics in general is, that they regarded the principle of evil, whether animate or inanimate, as inherent in matter. They unquestionably did not agree with the catholic Christians in supposing that Satan and his angels had been created by the Supreme God as good angels, and had fallen through their own wickedness from their high estate ; — a conception with which we are familiar through the mythology of Milton. Their doctrine, as we have no reason to doubt, corresponded more nearly with the original Persian doctrine, which had passed, as we have seen, into the philosophy of their times. They believed the antagonist principle in the universe to have been by nature bad and resident in matter. In this respect they were nearly

* *Advers. Marcion. Lib. I. c. 15. p. 373.*



allied to the Manichæans. But it is to be added, that the Valentinians, at least, do not appear, like the Manichæans, to have considered this principle as having always existed in primitive matter; but to have regarded it as assuming being and life when primitive matter was endued with its various forms at the creation.

IN concluding this subject of the opinions of the Gnostics concerning the immediate causes of evil in this world, it may be remarked, that, in proportion as Christianity afforded a more definite idea of a benevolent author of all things, the question of the origin of evil assumed new interest. It being conceded that the only infinite Power in the universe is purely beneficent, the problem, Why does evil exist? at once presented itself. The thoughts of men were directed to the subject; and the imperfect solution of the Gnostics was but one among those which were formed. The catholic Christians, generally, did not speculate so much concerning it as the heretics, nor were they agreed in their theories. But in the writings of the more philosophical of their number, in those of Clement and Origen, for example, we find some just and noble views. They taught that

moral evil was the necessary result of that freedom of agency in created beings, without which they could not be subjects of praise or blame ; and that the evils, so called, proceeding from God, were disciplinary and corrective, the admonitions and chastisements of a father, the remedies of a physician.

THE generality of the Gnostics adopted the principles that have been explained. But concerning the immersion of spirit in matter the theosophic Gnostics pursued their theory still farther into the region of the Pleroma, and found its occasion in disorders which there took place. But their views on this subject were connected with their whole system of theosophic speculations, and to these we will next attend.



CHAPTER VIII.

ON THE PECULIAR SPECULATIONS OF THE THEOSOPHIC GNOSTICS.

SECTION I.

Introductory Remarks on the Character of Ancient Philosophy.

I FEEL a reluctance to proceed at once to an account of the more imaginative part of the speculations of the Gnostics without some words of preparation. It would be doing them injustice to give a naked statement of their belief, if we may call it by so grave a name, without any explanation of the general character of the philosophy of that period in which it had its origin. A stranger from a foreign land, of which the manners and customs are altogether different from those of the country he is visiting, if brought among individuals unprepared for the peculiarities of his dress and behaviour, would not be more unfairly estimated, or exposed to more unfounded ridicule, than a speculatist of ancient times, whose opinions should at once

be confronted with the conceptions of the present day. It should be understood, also, that a modern language is often but an imperfect instrument for expressing the opinions of an ancient theorist. What is true of poetry is true also of the speculations of the ancients. The plausibility of the latter, like the beauty of the former, not unfrequently depends on a nice adaptation of words, *callida verborum junctura*, which can hardly be imitated in translation, and disappears in an abstract. It is often the case, that modern terms do not sufficiently correspond with those of an ancient language to admit of their being fitted together in the same manner. Having, then, formerly remarked the disadvantage to which the Gnostics are exposed from the circumstance that our accounts of them are derived principally from their opponents,* we will now attend to the other obstacles which lie in the way of a correct apprehension and a just estimate of their more mystical doctrines, arising from the general character of ancient philosophy, and the difficulties attending its study.

THE books of ancient philosophers are left

* See Vol. II. p. 34, seqq.



us. The dead letter still remains ; but it is not easy to reanimate it with their thoughts. The same words are now printed which were originally written ; but of the ideas which these words expressed, many have been essentially modified, or have become wholly obsolete. What was once a vivid conception can now be contemplated but dimly and imperfectly. What once was linked with a system of opinions, and recalled many associations, now finds nothing with which to connect itself in our minds. Our sphere of knowledge is greatly enlarged ; a much stronger light falls upon it ; delusions have disappeared ; many objects, which were partially seen and misapprehended, are now clearly discerned, and many present themselves under new aspects and relations. We may translate into our own language the words used by ancient philosophers ; but our modern terms are often far from suggesting to our minds the conceptions which those words once conveyed. In the progress of time, many ideas have been decomposed, and many have entered into new combinations, forming new aggregates. Every thing changeable in our minds, all but the essential principles of human nature, has been more or less changed. To find in an ancient author a strain of sentiment with which our

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own feelings fully accord, a series of thoughts which appears to us altogether true, or reasoning which brings conviction to our own minds, is like hearing our native tongue in a strange land.

The speculations of the ancients were seldom such as, being addressed to the common reason of men and founded in universal truth, and therefore expressed in its ever intelligible language, require, throughout all ages, only a similar apprehension of truth in order to be understood. The difference between the intellectual character of men in ancient and in modern times may be felt at once ; but long-continued attention is required to comprehend, as far as may be, the extent and nature of the particulars which it embraces. We are continually liable to be deceived by apparent correspondences of language ; and as great mistakes are in consequence sometimes committed in the study of their philosophy, as if, on account of the identity of name, we were to imagine that the consuls of Rome resembled in power and office the consuls of modern commercial nations.

Language is a full and ready means of communication only between those whose minds have been formed under similar influences,

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whose ideas have been moulded after the same fashion, and whose associations run in similar channels. Such correspondence of thought and feeling is required, not merely that the terms used may be understood in the same sense, but also that the mind of the reader may be able to furnish at once those connecting and accessory ideas, that perpetual commentary on the words employed, which is necessary to supply the many breaks and deficiencies of expression that have their origin in the unavoidable imperfection of language. In order to receive from the words of an ancient writer the meaning and impression which they were once adapted to convey, we must often arrange our thoughts in new combinations, form new conceptions, and refashion others, regard subjects under an aspect foreign from that to which we are accustomed, and restore associations that have long been obsolete. We must forget our present knowledge and belief; and place ourselves in the midst of the imperfect information and the erroneous views by which he was surrounded. If this be not done, we may substitute for his speculations an incongruous sort of modern-antique doctrine; and may praise or censure him, equally without reason, for the supposititious opinions we have ascribed to him. Two writ-

ers of opposite belief may each fancy that he finds his own philosophy in an ancient author, and both may be equally in error, for both may have committed the anachronism of supposing him to have reference to conceptions which did not exist till long after his day. Some modern accounts of ancient doctrines resemble the descriptions that have been given, or have been feigned to be given, of European manners and customs by natives of the East. They are travellers' wonders. We may find in them verbal truth and essential error. The ideas of the ancient writer may be so disguised as hardly to be recognized, by being divested of their native dress, clothed in new words, and presented apart from all their usual associations. We find partial views, misapprehensions, an inability to estimate what is perceived according to its relative importance, and, in consequence of all, false inferences, which, if the expositor have a theory to maintain, or fancy that he has a talent for disquisition, spread their cloudy or dazzling discoloration over the whole subject.

IN studying the speculations of the ancients, we are, then, as far as possible, to keep their conceptions steadily before our minds, to refer



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their language directly to those conceptions, and not to interpret it to ourselves through the ill-adapted medium of modern opinions and a modern tongue. But the earnest and unrelaxed attention which is thus required is, in itself, not altogether favorable to our attaining a right apprehension of the subject of our study. This arises from the character of ancient philosophy. The difficulty of the task leads us to examine too closely and intently theories not of a nature to be submitted to such critical scrutiny. We fix our eyes too steadily upon speculations adapted only for a general and cursory view. We expect from the author a grave feeling of the responsibility of the discussion, corresponding to the gravity of the task imposed upon ourselves; and we are likely to become far more earnest than he was to determine precisely his meaning, and reconcile his opinions, and, perhaps, his metaphors, with each other.

REASONING upon the higher and more important subjects of thought was a far less serious thing with the ancient heathen philosophers than it is at the present day. The whole region of knowledge that lies beyond the sphere of the senses was involved in obscu-

city and doubt. No great truths generally acknowledged served as landmarks to guide the explorer. The higher philosophy, therefore, of the ancient heathens, comprehending all that relates to their theology, consisted, in great part, of conjectures and doubtful hypotheses. Unable to find arguments to satisfy the understanding, they addressed themselves to the imagination. Proof of any theory could not be furnished. Uncertainty was on every side. The voice of Revelation was as yet unheard; and the assurance which we derive from it of the fundamental truths of religion was unknown. In this absence of any decided belief, men were neither accustomed to reason strictly themselves, nor to demand strict reasoning from others. What was plausible passed current, and became a substitute for truth.

In the famous dialogue in which Plato gives an account of the creation and constitution of the universe, he represents Timæus, to whom he assigns the explanation of those subjects, as thus speaking: — “Since much has been said by many concerning the gods and the production of the universe, you will not wonder if my account of these things should not be fitted in all respects to bear the strictest examination, and command universal assent. But, if I pro-



duce one not less probable than any other, it is to be received with favor ; for you must remember that he who speaks and you who judge are but men ; so that if you receive from me a probable *mythos*, it will be well to seek no farther.” * A probable *mythos*, or, in other words, an imaginary representation, supposed to have a semblance of the truth, was often all that was aimed at by the ancients in similar speculations. As such only, some of the more sober Gnostics may have regarded their theories concerning the spiritual world. It might be well, perhaps, especially in treating of the speculations of the ancients, to adopt the term *mythos* into our own language in one of its ancient senses, as denoting an imaginary account of unknown things or events, not supposed to be true in its details, but intended to affect the mind in the same manner as the truth.† In modern philosophy this kind of writing is not common ; but there is an example of it by the celebrated author of “The Light of Nature

* *Timeus*, p. 29.

† The modernized term *myth* (English), or *mythe* (French and German), has been lately introduced ; but it has been used so vaguely as to be rather a disadvantage than a gain, as regards precision of language.

Pursued," in "The Vision," in which he describes the future life.

THE art of reasoning, more slow in its progress than any other, was very imperfectly understood by the ancients. In every branch of philosophy, not less than in the physical sciences, they committed the mistake of founding their hypotheses on preconceptions and not on facts. As regards the physical sciences, their imaginary and false speculations are now only a matter of history. But they were far more exposed to error in treating of objects beyond the sphere of the senses, than in explaining the phenomena of the material world. When, with our very different and more correct modes of thinking, we now study their theories, it is like freely examining in the daytime a spectacle adapted to be viewed only at a distance by artificial light. To explain the appearances observed by them, instead of investigating the laws of matter and mind, and the relations of existing things to each other, they passed beyond the bounds of human knowledge, and supposed the operation of agencies, beings, and qualities, of the existence of which no proof had been or could be produced.



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Thus, to explain the origin of the world, the Epicureans fancied an infinity of atoms for ever falling through void space, with a slight inclination towards each other, and for ever forming numberless combinations, of which this universe was one. To account for the changes in the qualities of material objects, Plato taught, that, from eternity, these qualities had possessed existence as *Ideas*, and that they sometimes were connected with and sometimes separated from the same portion of primitive matter; the disappearance of one Idea, or quality, being followed by the access of another. The existence of evil was, as we have seen, explained by the supposition of an evil nature inherent in eternal, uncreated matter, the necessary substratum of the visible universe. In the common intercourse of life every one may meet with undisciplined thinkers, of active minds, who are accustomed to frame theories after the same fashion. As I have said, their defect is, that they assume the operation of causes, or laws, of the existence of which there is neither proof nor probability; and it may be added, that this assumption is often connected with mistakes in regard to the character of the phenomena to be explained.

Even in modern times this sort of reasoning, after having been partially, at least, driven from the physical sciences, has maintained its ground in the higher departments of philosophy. We have examples of it in the *monads* and *preëstablished harmony* of Leibnitz ; in the necessary scale of being *from Infinite to man, from man to nothing*, which Bolingbroke imposed on the good sense of Pope ; in Hartley's theory of *vibrations*, and the conversion of *vibratiuncles* into complex and abstract ideas ; in Priestley's doctrine of the materiality of the soul, connected by him with the position that matter has no other properties than those of attraction, repulsion, and extension ; in the speculations of Darwin in his *Zoönomia* ; and throughout the writings of the modern German metaphysicians.

WHEN such conjectural hypotheses find favor, they will be multiplied abundantly ; for they are of easy construction. They require no patient investigation of facts, no analysis nor induction. Nor, as they involve conceptions beyond the sphere of experience, do they admit of those precise definitions of thought which are incompatible with error, and which only a superior intellect can combine into new forms



of truth. The theorist passes at once from the world of reality into the world of imagination, the transcendental world, where he may fabricate and put together his materials at pleasure. Whatever phenomena present themselves, if he have sufficient ingenuity, he needs to be at no loss for an explanation. As in the Ptolemaic system of the world, with its *centrics and excentrics, cycles and epicycles, orb in orb*, he may by new additions always contrive to keep his hypothesis in repair, till it falls to pieces at the shock of truth. We are apt, indeed, through a natural mistake, to infer from the difficulty that we may find in understanding such speculations that they are difficult of fabrication. If we suffer ourselves to be deceived by the pretensions of a writer, we may fancy that he thinks profoundly, when he is only so indistinct, confused, and illogical, that we cannot fathom his meaning. But truth is always clear. Good sense is always intelligible. Obscurity is the birthplace and the lurking-hole of error. We can make no progress in the investigation of truth, if our ideas are vague and unformed. We might as well attempt to determine the phenomena of the heavenly bodies by observations taken in a mist. The first requisite in a philosopher is, that he apprehend

his own meaning ; and if he do so, he can hardly fail to make his meaning understood. Other things being equal, a writer deserves to be read in proportion as he is intelligible ; that is, in proportion as his ideas are definite, clear, and rightly disposed in their relations to each other.

If obscurity were an indication of wisdom, the theosophic Gnostics might be reckoned among the wisest of thinkers. We need not doubt, however, that there were many among them who fancied that they understood the speculations of their school. They whose minds are confused, and who are unaccustomed to look for a precise meaning in words, often readily believe that they comprehend what is unintelligible. Wanting sagacity to discern the indefiniteness or the inconsistency of ideas, they are satisfied with words that present a semblance of meaning. At the same time, as was the case with the Gnostics, their vanity may be flattered by the thought that they can understand what wiser men cannot ; and they may, in consequence, admire the writer who affords them this gratification. In the incantations of former times, barbarous and unmeaning words were used to compel the spirits evoked ; and the history of our race, and our own observation,

may attest the magical power of nonsense over the spirits of men.

IN proportion as we think inaccurately and reason illogically, in proportion as we neglect to define our conceptions, and trace out their relations, and discover their mutual bearings, so will our notions both concerning different subjects, and concerning the same subject as viewed in various connections, be irreconcilable with one another. It is, I conceive, impossible, and if possible, it must be the labor of severe and long-continued thought, to detect all the inconsistencies of our ideas, and reduce all our opinions to a uniform system of belief. It is a task which the ancient philosophers did not attempt to perform. Their metaphysical speculations had more alliance with poetry than with reasoning. Often the conceptions presented by them were adapted to the purpose in view, with little regard to those which they might elsewhere express. Hence much unprofitable labor has been spent in endeavouring to bend their language to such a meaning, that the different doctrines of the same individual, or the same sect, may not appear altogether incongruous with one another. Some of their modern expositors have been far more concerned than

they were, to render their philosophy consistent with itself. When such an account is given of the general system of opinions of an ancient theorist, as puts them in competition with those of a true philosopher; or when such an account is given, that we do not at once perceive great oversights and deficiencies, this very circumstance affords reason to distrust its correctness. There is ground to suspect that the doctrines of the ancient theorist have been refashioned by his modern expositor. It is often much easier to fabricate a scheme of opinions to which the language of an ancient writer approximates, or to which many of his expressions may be conformed, — an imaginary theory, which he did not hold, but which, if he had thought consistently, he might perhaps have held, — than to determine and explain the real state of his conceptions at different times, and the varying senses of the same words as employed by him in different connections.

TRUTH, in respect to the higher objects of thought, was of much less importance in ancient times than in our own. It was of less importance, because, even if attained, it could have little influence on the generality of men. The free use of books being confined to compara-

tively a very small number, and all other means of communicating the opinions and sentiments of enlightened men being scanty and imperfect, it could not be widely promulgated; and so far as it was promulgated, it must appeal to arguments that but few would understand, and urge considerations that but few would feel. The express authority of revelation alone affords a firm and sufficient basis for those truths which most concern human happiness and virtue. The most excellent speculations of ancient philosophers, though they tended without doubt to give a higher elevation to a few superior minds, — who, through a very natural, but very great mistake, may now appear to us as the representatives of the ancient world, — yet affected in no considerable degree the moral condition of the generality of men. Truth, therefore, being pursued with little view to any practical result, was not sought for intently, nor with strong interest. No ancient philosopher appears to have thought more like a wise and good man of modern times than Cicero; and in some of his writings there is a moral grandeur and power that no modern eloquence has surpassed. In his work “Concerning the Nature of the Gods,” “that most difficult,” he says, “and most obscure question,” he begins with stating its importance in the

strong language of a religious philosopher. "Were piety toward the gods done away, I do not know," he says, "but that mutual trust, and all that binds men together in society, and that regard to the rights of others, which stands alone as the most excellent of virtues, would also come to an end." Yet he concludes this work with stating, in the person of Cotta, the objections to any divine providence, urged by the disciples of the New Academy, and leaves them not merely unanswered, but without attempting to weaken their force, except by a declaration that he thought the opposite opinion more probable. They were such objections, we may suppose, as had pressed upon his own mind, though without overthrowing his religious faith; and such a statement of them, even coming from him, was not likely, as he knew, to produce any perceptible effect on the popular belief.

THE loose reasoning of the ancients proceeded in great part from the want of clear conceptions; and consequently the signification of the language employed in it was fluctuating and indeterminate. Many of the principal terms in ancient philosophy have but a dim and uncertain meaning. The conception meant to be expressed by a particular name embraces



perhaps incongruous ideas, of which the attention, as it is differently directed, is now fixed upon one, and then upon another. As in the mechanical arts, the tools of the workman become more finished, and are better adapted to their purpose, in proportion to the progress of those arts, so it is, in the art of reasoning, with words, the tools of the logician. They become more clear and definite in their signification as men think and reason more distinctly and accurately. But in proportion as any period, or any school, is characterized by loose reasoning and cloudy and uncertain language, we may expect to find it distinguished also by the number of its philosophical theories, and the fancied subtlety and sublimity of its speculations. The fog that is spread around changes the appearance of familiar objects; it magnifies their forms, and blends with them its own unsubstantial shapes. The whole aspect of nature is different from that presented in a clear light; and he who describes, as really existing, what he has fancied himself to behold under this delusion, may be unintelligible to one who sees things as they are. In some of the works of the mystical metaphysicians of the present day, we may find as striking examples as any which antiquity affords, of general terms, floating loosely through a wide

sphere of meaning, and incapable of being fixed in any definite sense ; of language, deprived of all real import, and presenting only spectral and unformed conceptions ; and of new and barbarous words, the signification of which has neither been settled by usage, that best definer of language, nor analyzed and explained by the inventor.

THERE is still another consideration to be attended to concerning the speculations of the ancient philosophers. When men's ideas are unformed and their language indefinite, those who attempt to speculate necessarily speculate obscurely. Having but a partial and unsteady view of the objects to which their attention is directed, they express themselves with an indistinctness that may conceal error ; in figurative language, between which and what is literally intended more or less correspondence may be supposed ; or with a wide generality of phrase that leaves their meaning indeterminate, — a matter of controversy, to be settled according to the different judgments of their disciples. Hence the sayings of those who were, or who were reputed, wise, in the earlier stages of intellectual cultivation, acquired the name of “dark sayings” ; and enigmatic language, and

imperfect modes of expression, by which nothing was clearly explained, came to be considered as the appropriate dialect of philosophy. Thus a great fault was regarded as a badge of intellectual eminence. Obscurity was thought to be characteristic of profoundness. The incapacity which could not attain to clear ideas wrapped itself in dark robes, and spoke oracles in paradoxes and ambiguous language.

The causes which produced this state of things have continued to operate, more or less, through the whole progress of philosophy. The alchemists and astrologers of former times used a peculiar *gergo*, or cant language, intelligible only to themselves; and other professors of false philosophy have, like them, sought to distinguish themselves from the generality by peculiar modes of speech, and the misuse of language. During the age of the Gnostics, those conceptions which have led to the affectation of obscurity were in full strength. We find them expressed and defended by Clement of Alexandria; and a few sentences from that eminent father may cast some further light on the subject.

“All those,” he says, “who have theologized, both Barbarians and Greeks, have concealed the principles of things; and have delivered

the truth in enigmas and symbols, in allegories and metaphors, and in such modes of expression." *

Elsewhere he gives the reasons for adopting this style of teaching.

"Life would fail me, should I undertake to enumerate all those who have philosophized symbolically, for the sake of assisting the memory by brevity, and in order to excite attention to the truth. . . . All truths shown under a veil appear greater and more venerable; beautiful, like fruits seen through water, or forms that discover their lineaments under drapery. For a blaze of light shows defects. Besides, what is plainly seen can be understood but in one sense; but truths should admit of diverse acceptations, as they do when expressed obscurely. When they are so expressed, the unskilled and ignorant man falls into error, but the enlightened man† comprehends them. The wise have not been willing that all things should be free to all; nor that the treasures of wisdom should be communicated to those who have not even dreamed of purifying their souls. For it is not right to bestow on every one what has been

* Stromat. V. § 4. p. 658.

† 'Ο γνωστικός, "The Gnostic." See Vol. II. p. 10.

acquired with so much labor, nor to expound the mysteries of the Logos [of Wisdom] to the profane. It is related that Hipparchus, the Pythagorean, being charged with explaining clearly in his writings the doctrines of Pythagoras, was expelled from the school, and that a monumental pillar was erected to him as if he had been dead." *

Clement has much more to the same effect in the fifth book of his *Stromata*.† In support of his doctrine he refers to many real or supposed examples and authorities. Clement himself, however, is not distinguished, as a writer, for *studied* obscurity, nor did his doctrine prevail among catholic Christians. But, in the passages quoted from him, he is to be considered as the representative of a class, and as expressing opinions common in his age.

In treating of this subject in the fifth book of his *Stromata*, it seems evident that the hidden wisdom which he principally had in mind consisted in speculations relating to the nature of the Divinity, "the sacred mystic doctrine," as he expresses it, "concerning the

* *Stromat.* V. § 9. pp. 679, 680.

† Pp. 656 - 694.

Unoriginated and his Powers." * It was the subject about which the theosophic Gnostics especially exercised their imaginations. Clement introduces the ancient doctrine respecting obscurity in various other places, and particularly dwells upon it again in the sixth book of his *Stromata*.† Elsewhere, after maintaining a common notion of the fathers, that the heathen philosophers borrowed much from the Jewish Scriptures, he represents them as imitating from those Scriptures "the hidden character of the barbaric [the Jewish] philosophy, its symbolical and enigmatical form, which is most useful, or rather most necessary, to a knowledge of the truth." ‡

It is easy to understand what must have been the consequences of such an opinion of the excellence of obscurity. He who does not study clearness in the use of words cannot think clearly; for, as regards all abstract subjects, words are not merely the means by which we express ourselves, they are also the means by which we think. We can no more reason on such subjects with a confused notion of their

* *Stromat.* V. p. 694. *Conf.* pp. 685, 686; 689, 690; 692, seqq. *Stromat.* VII. p. 838.

† Pp. 798 – 817.

‡ *Stromat.* V. § 1. p. 429.

significance, than we can pursue an investigation in the higher branches of mathematics with a confused notion of the significance of the symbols to be employed. But when obscurity becomes a subject of praise, or when the great mistake is made of supposing it not to be the natural result of incapacity, but to be in some way connected with superiority of mind, there will be many pretended teachers of wisdom, who will pour forth their imperfect and incoherent ideas, leaving it to their admirers to find or to imagine a meaning.

THE preceding remarks may prepare us for the speculations of the theosophic Gnostics concerning the origin of spiritual beings, and of the material universe. But a single example from an ancient writer will serve to illustrate what has been said, and to give a more distinct view of ancient philosophy. I will produce one from Plato, "that wisest man of Greece," says Cicero, "far excelling all others in knowledge." It is the account which he gives in his *Timæus* of the formation of the Soul of the Universe;* a famous passage, about which much was written in ancient times. The subject, it

* *Timæus*, pp. 35, 36.

will be perceived, has an analogy to that of the speculations of the Gnostics.

"THE Divinity," says Plato, "compounded the Soul of the Universe of the following materials in the following manner. Of that substance which is undivided and always the same [the substance of things *intelligible* *], and of that which becomes divided in the formation of bodies [*primitive* matter †], he compounded a third kind of substance [matter indued with qualities ‡], intermediate between both, partaking of the nature both of the *Uniform* and the *Different*; § and accordingly placed it in

* "Of things *intelligible* "; that is, of such as can be discerned by the intellect alone; the opposite of things *sensible*. Vid. *Timæus*, pp. 27-29; p. 48; pp. 51, 52. *Phædo*, p. 78, seqq. *Sophista*, p. 248. *Politicus*, p. 269.

† "*Primitive* matter "; that is, matter supposed to exist without qualities, as the mere substratum or recipient of qualities. Vid. *Timæus*, pp. 48-51. See Additional Note, A.

‡ What is meant by the third kind of substance is to be inferred from a doctrine fundamental in Plato's philosophy, that the union of things intelligible, that is, of *Ideas*, with primitive matter produces the forms of matter perceptible by the senses. It is, perhaps, hardly necessary to observe, that the word "substance" (*οὐσία*) as used above must be taken in its widest acceptation, as denoting "whatever exists, not as the accident of any thing else."

§ *Τῆς τε ταύτου φύσεως αὐτὴ καὶ τῆς ἑτέρας*, "of the nature both of the *Uniform* and the *Different*." The words *ταύτη* and

the midst, between that which is without parts and that which is divided in bodies. Then taking these three, he mingled them together, so that the whole had one new form; forcing the nature of the *Different*, which was hard to be blended, into connection with the *Uniform*, and mixing them with the third kind of substance,* so as of the three to form one. Then

θάρερον have commonly been rendered *Idem* and *Diversum*, "the Same" and "the Diverse" or "Different"; but this rendering conveys no clear ideas. It is evident that by those terms are respectively meant the two substances first mentioned; but I think no satisfactory explanation has been given, either in ancient or modern times, of the sense in which they are applied to those substances. But by "the substance which is always the same" (a description which, with a little variation of phrase, repeatedly occurs in Plato, as in "The Sophist," p. 248, and "The Statesman," p. 269) is evidently meant by him the substance which is always the same with itself, that is, which is always "uniform." By *θάρερον* may, then, be meant the substance which is "different" from that which is always uniform, or "the other" of the only two original kinds of substance. However this may be, the names I have used, "the Uniform" and "the Different," sufficiently express the nature of the substances intended. Plato, here as elsewhere, evidently affects obscurity. — I do not perceive that any light is thrown on his use of the terms in this passage by his discussion in "The Sophist" (p. 254, seqq.) concerning "*τὸ τε τὰντὸν καὶ θάρερον*," the terms being there used to denote "the Same" and "the Different," considered as two of the most universal *Ideas*. If I mistake not, a comparison of the use of the terms in the passage just referred to with their use in the *Timæus* only serves to show the confusion that existed in the philosophical conceptions and language of Plato.

* "Mixing them with the third kind of substance"; verbally,

he divided the whole into as many portions as were proper, each portion being a mixture of the *Uniform*, the *Different*, and the third kind of substance. He began to divide thus: he took first one portion from the whole; afterwards he took the double of the same; next a third, sesquialter of the second and triple of the first; a fourth, the double of the second; a fifth, the triple of the third; a sixth, eight times the first; and a seventh, twenty-seven times the first.* Afterwards he filled up the double and triple intervals, still taking portions from the same, and placing them in those intervals, so that in each interval there should be two means; the one mean exceeding one of its extremes by a certain part of that extreme, and exceeded by the other by the same part of this other; the other mean exceeding one extreme and exceeded by the other by the same number.† Thus sesquialter, ses-

"mixing them with *the substance*"; *μυγνὺς δὲ μετὰ τῆς οὐσίας*. By *ἡ οὐσία*, as here used, there can be no question that the third kind of substance is meant; though, as two other kinds of substance had been mentioned before, the use of the article without any more definite reference produces a verbal ambiguity.

* These portions correspond to the following numbers: —

1. 2. 3. 4. 9. 8. 27.

† The first proportion mentioned is what is called *harmonic*. It appears, for example, in the numbers, 6. 8. 12; as 8 exceeds

quitertian, and sesquioctave intervals * being produced by these connecting links between the intervals first mentioned, he filled up all the sesquitertian intervals with intervals of a sesquioctave ; leaving a portion of each sesquitertian

6 by one third of 6, and 12 exceeds 8 by one third of 12. The second proportion, it will be perceived, is arithmetical. The intervals to be filled correspond to those of the numbers mentioned in the last note. The double intervals are those in the series, 1. 2. 4. 8. The triple are those in the series, 1. 3. 9. 27. By supplying means in harmonic proportion for the double intervals we have the series,

1. $1\frac{1}{2}$. 2. $2\frac{2}{3}$. 4. $5\frac{1}{3}$. 8.

The arithmetical means of the double intervals will be as follows : —

1. $1\frac{1}{2}$. 2. 3. 4. 6. 8.

The harmonic means of the triple intervals will stand thus : —

1. $1\frac{1}{2}$. 3. $4\frac{1}{2}$. 9. $13\frac{1}{2}$. 27.

The arithmetical, thus : —

1. 2. 3. 6. 9. 18. 27.

Then inserting both the harmonic and arithmetical means, the series of double intervals will be thus supplied : —

1. $1\frac{1}{2}$. $1\frac{1}{2}$. 2. $2\frac{2}{3}$. 3. 4. $5\frac{1}{3}$. 6. 8.

The series of triple intervals, thus : —

1. $1\frac{1}{2}$. 2. 3. $4\frac{1}{2}$. 6. 9. $13\frac{1}{2}$. 18. 27.

* “*Sesquialter*” denotes the ratio of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 1. A *sesquialter* interval is one of which the greater extreme exceeds the less in this ratio. By “*sesquitertian*” is here meant the ratio of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 1 ; and by “*sesquioctave*” that of $1\frac{1}{2}$ to 1. The use of the terms “*sesquitertian*” and “*sesquioctave*” in these senses is borrowed from the use of the corresponding Latin terms by Cicero in his translation of the passage of Plato, which is to be found among his *Fragments*.

bounded by limits which have to each other the relation of the numbers 256 and 243.*

* The sesquitercian intervals are those in the two series last given which intervene between the following numbers : —

1 and $1\frac{1}{2}$. $1\frac{1}{2}$ and 2. 2 and $2\frac{2}{3}$. 3 and 4. 4 and $5\frac{1}{2}$.
 $4\frac{1}{2}$ and 6. 6 and 8. $13\frac{1}{2}$ and 18.

These are severally to be supplied with sesquioctave intervals, thus : —

1. $1\frac{1}{2}$. $1\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$. $1\frac{1}{2}$. $1\frac{1}{2}$. $1\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$. $1\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$. 2.
 2. $2\frac{1}{2}$. $2\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$. $2\frac{2}{3}$. 3. $3\frac{1}{2}$. $3\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$. 4.

and so on.

But when the sesquitercian intervals are thus filled, a portion of each is left between the last sesquioctave and the greater extreme, and the greater extreme has to the sesquioctave the ratio of 256 to 243. Thus $1\frac{1}{2}$ is to $1\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$ as 256 to 243.

What, then, was the purpose of Plato in giving all these numbers and proportions? The answer is, that these numbers, thus proportioned to each other, are expressive of musical intervals, or, in other words, they are what are called *musical numbers*. This will appear clearly by multiplying them severally by 768, so as to avoid the fractions, as in the following table : —

1	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$	$1\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$
768	864	972	1024	1152	1296	1458
2	$2\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$	$2\frac{2}{3}$	3	$3\frac{1}{2}$	$3\frac{1}{2}\frac{1}{2}$
1536	1728	1944	2048	2304	2592	2916

and so on.

The numbers produced by this multiplication may be found in the Table of Musical Numbers in Rees's Cyclopædia (Article *Music*), as far as to 2048; and the higher numbers, and those to be produced by a further multiplication, may be obtained by the rule there given.

It was reported of Pythagoras, many centuries after his death, that he first discovered the ratios of the musical intervals, in his investigations respecting the sounds produced by the heavenly

Thus the mixture from which he divided these portions was wholly used up. Then cutting the

bodies in their motions. According to Macrobius (In Somnium Scipionis, Lib. II. c. 1), he found that no musical notes were in concord, unless the higher had to the lower one of the following ratios : sesquitercian, sesquialter, double, triple, quadruple, and sesquioctave. These, with the ratio of 243 to 256, are the relations between the numbers of Plato.

The ratio of 243 to 256 expresses that of the ancient musical *limma*, of which Macrobius (*ubi supra*) says, — “The ancients have named a sound minor than a tone, a semitone ; which, it is found, differs as little from a tone as the numbers 243 and 256 from each other. . . . This Plato calls a *limma*.”

The conception, then, which is the nucleus of Plato's whole system of numbers, is simply, that the soul of the universe was formed according to the laws of harmony. This is the solution of his riddle. He might have acknowledged Dryden as his expositor : —

“From harmony, from heavenly harmony,
This universal frame began ;
From harmony to harmony,
Through all the compass of the notes, it ran.”

“More obscure than the numbers of Plato,” or “More obscure than the *Timæus* of Plato,” (the true reading is doubtful,) is an expression of Cicero in one of his letters to Atticus. Tennemann, however, says, in his “System of the Platonic Philosophy” (in German, Vol. III. p. 179, note), that, “however obscure and enigmatic these Platonic numbers have been represented in ancient and modern times, yet in reality they are not so. Through an accurate acquaintance with the theory of the Pythagoreans concerning numbers, and the astronomical knowledge of the times of Plato, they might be explained, if it were worth the trouble.” The remark is characteristic.

It is probable, that, in describing the formation of the Soul of
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composition through lengthwise into two parts, he adjusted the middle of one part to that of

the Universe according to the laws of harmony, Plato had in mind the Pythagorean doctrine of the harmony produced by the heavenly bodies in their revolutions ; — *ille tantus et tam dulcis sonus*, which Scipio heard in his " Dream,"

" ' When ' nature thundered in his opening ears,
And ' charmed ' him with the music of the spheres."

But Plato himself does not attempt to explain how this music of the heavenly bodies might be produced by the structure of the Mundane Soul ; nor does he indicate any relation between the two conceptions. By later writers (Chalcidius in *Timæum*, p. 313. Ed. Fabricii ; Macrobius in *Somnium Scipionis*, Lib. II. capp. 1-3) such a relation was conceived of as existing. — It was imagined that musical sounds were produced by the impulses of the heavenly bodies upon the medium through which they moved (Macrobius says " the air"), and that these sounds were harmonious, because the distances of those bodies from each other corresponded to musical intervals. Eratosthenes, in the second century before Christ, attempted scientifically to measure the earth. He determined its circumference to be 31,500 Roman miles (the Roman mile is to the English as 967 to 1056). Censorinus (*De Die Natali*, c. 13), carrying back this knowledge to the time of Pythagoras, says that Pythagoras taught that the distance of the moon from the earth was half the circumference of the earth, or 15,750 Roman miles, which (for some unexplained reason) he considered as corresponding to the interval of a tone ; that Mercury was a semitone, or 7,875 miles distant from the Moon ; Venus the same distance from Mercury ; the Sun two tones and a semitone, or 23,625 miles from Venus, and so on ; making, in the whole, the distance of the orb of the fixed stars from the earth to be 94,500 Roman miles. According to Macrobius, the Platonists, proceeding on the same principle of a reference to musical intervals, computed the distances of the heavenly

the other in the form of the letter X, and, bending each round into a circle, he fitted them together, and to each other, opposite to the place where they were first put together, and gave them a revolving motion always uniform through the same space. And he made one of the circles exterior and the other interior. The exterior motion he appointed to be of the *uniform* nature, the interior of the *different*. That of the *Uniform* he carried round *laterally* to the right; that of the *Different*, *diameter-wise* to the left.* The superior power he gave

bodies differently, but not more correctly. — Thus a theory was formed to explain an imaginary effect by imaginary causes, between which causes and the effect no intelligible relation could be traced.

* Plato conceived of the outer circle of the Mundane Soul as causing the daily revolution of the heavens from east to west, and of the inner circle, divided into seven parts (to be immediately mentioned above), as causing the revolution of the Sun, Moon, and planets, from west to east. In calling the west the right, and the east the left, he used a mode of speaking, the correctness of which Aristotle (*De Cælo*, Lib. II. c. 2) says was asserted by the Pythagoreans; and though Aristotle argues strenuously for an opposite use of the terms, it seems subsequently to have been common in treating of the heavens. See Philo de Cherubim. Opp. I. 142. Plinii Hist. Nat. Lib. II. 6. 4.

Plato says that the outer circle was carried round *κατὰ πλευράς*, *laterally*, the inner *κατὰ διάμετρον*, which I have ventured to render *diameter-wise*. Apparently, what he intended by these indefinite words may be thus explained. He conceived of the inner circle of the soul (answering in its position to the Zodiac) as re-

to the periphery of the *uniform* and homogeneous nature. This he left undivided ; but the interior he divided into seven unequal circles, according to the several divisions of the double and triple intervals,* there being three intervals of each kind. And he appointed the circles to move contrariwise to each other, but three with equal velocity ; the other four with velocities different from each other and

volving in the plane of its diameters ; that is, as he terms it, *κατὰ διάμετρον*, *diameter-wise* ; but the outer circle, which, in his view, carried round the heavenly bodies, through every part of heaven, in their daily revolution, he conceived of as not revolving in the plane of its diameters, but as turning on an axis (the axis of the heavens) passing from north to south through its opposite sides ; that is, according to his expression, as carried round *κατὰ πλευράν*, *laterally*.

Stallbaum, in his late elaborate edition of the *Timæus*, quotes a passage from Proclus, who, he says, "very clearly explains" the terms just remarked upon "from the geometrical method of philosophizing of the ancient Pythagoreans and Platonists." But to my apprehension the pretended explanation of Proclus is only so far intelligible, as to show that he had in mind some conception equally incoherent and irrelevant. Whatever meaning is to be discerned in the passage quoted from him consists, to all appearance, of imaginations of his own ; and I do not know on what ground the imaginations of Proclus, eight centuries after the time of Plato, are to be attributed to that philosopher. The later Platonists afford evidence for nothing concerning the philosophy of Plato but their own conceptions of it.

* The double and triple intervals are the six before mentioned. See p. 94, note †.



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from that of the three, but revolving according to rule.*

* The seven sections of the inner circle of the Mundane Soul are the seven orbs which Plato conceived of as carrying the heavenly bodies of our system round the earth from west to east. The distances of those bodies from the earth he supposed to be in the following order:—The Moon, the Sun, Venus, Mercury, Mars, Jupiter, and Saturn; unless, perhaps, he thought Mercury nearer the earth than Venus; a point on which the opinions of the ancients were divided. The inner circle of the Soul Plato has hitherto represented as a band. How he imagined it to be so divided as to form circles, one exterior to another, does not appear.

The three circles supposed to move with the same velocity are those which are the deferents of the Sun, Mercury, and Venus; Mercury and Venus each performing its apparent revolution round the Earth in about the same time with the Sun. But it is evident, that, if the orbs of Mercury and Venus are exterior to that of the Sun, and perform their revolutions in the same time with it, they must move, not with the like velocity, as Plato says (*τάχεται ὁμοίως*), but with greater velocity. He also describes the seven sections of the inner circle as moving contrariwise to each other (*κατὰ τὰναντία μὲν ἀλλήλοις*); but it is equally clear that circles all moving from west to east cannot move contrariwise to each other.

The contradiction of ideas, which represent circles of different diameters as performing their revolutions in the same time with the same velocity, does not admit of any management by which it may be veiled. The most we can do is to account for its appearance by a reference to the fact, that Plato had in mind the apparent motion of the three heavenly bodies of which he conceived those circles to be the deferents. The case is the same with his representation, that the seven circles which are deferents of the seven heavenly bodies all move from west to east, and at the same time move contrariwise to each other. This, likewise,

"But after the whole structure of the soul was completed agreeably to the mind of him

is to be accounted for only by supposing that he confounded the deferents of the heavenly bodies with the heavenly bodies themselves, and referred to the apparent motions of the latter. Of this there is no hint in the passage before us ; but that such was the fact appears from another passage a few pages after ; which, however, if it throw some light, — not on the meaning of Plato's words, for that cannot be, but on the conceptions in his mind when he wrote those words, — yet brings also a new access of darkness. Plato there says (pp. 38, 39), that Venus and Mercury perform their courses with the same velocity as the Sun, but "possess a power contrary to it (τῇ δ' ἐναντίαν εἰληχόμενος αὐτῷ δυνάμει) ; whence the Sun, Mercury, and Venus overtake and are overtaken by one another in turn." The Sun, Moon, and planets, he says, "are borne along by the oblique motion of the *Different* [the motion from west to east], passing through and controlled by the motion of the *Uniform* [the motion from east to west] ; some describing greater, and others lesser circles ; the latter bodies revolving more swiftly, and the former more slowly. But, in consequence of the motion of the *Uniform*, those which revolve most swiftly, when they overtake those which revolve more slowly, appear to be overtaken by them ; for this motion bends all their circles into spirals, in consequence of their moving under the action of two contrary forces, and thus causes that body which recedes most slowly from it, this being the swiftest motion, to appear nearest to it."

Stallbaum gives, in a note, a translation of the latter part of this passage, in which he aggravates its character by the mistake of substituting "the motion of the *Different*" for the "motion of the *Uniform*," as that which bends the courses of the heavenly bodies spirally, and "causes that body which recedes most slowly from it, this being the swiftest motion, to appear nearest to it." He then subjoins, — *Quæ quomodo intelligi debeant, certè nullè indiget explicatione* ; "How this is to be understood certainly needs



who framed it, he then fashioned the corporeal universe within it, and, adjusting the middle

no explanation." There is an error of one word in this remark. Instead of "needs," he should have said "admits."

Some fragments of meaning, however, may, I think, be discovered in the words of Plato himself. In consequence of "the motion of the *Uniform*," he says, "those bodies which revolve most swiftly, when they overtake those which revolve more slowly, appear to be overtaken by them." Apparently, he here refers to the fact, that, if one of the heavenly bodies of our system have a more rapid apparent motion to the east than another, then, viewed in reference to their daily revolution, the slower will appear to be gaining on the swifter. Having been to the east of it, it will appear to the west; and thus the slower, having first followed the swifter in its daily course, will afterwards rise, arrive at the meridian, and set before it. — The imagination of the courses of the heavenly bodies being rendered spiral by the contrary forces of "the *Uniform*" and "the *Different*" is in itself intelligible; but has no relation to the fact just mentioned, with which Plato has connected it. It appears to be an attempt to account for the retrograde motion of the planets; and, if so, it is as plausible a theory as that of Pliny (Hist. Nat. Lib. II. c. 13), who ascribes this motion to the percussion of the rays of the Sun, striking the planets in certain parts of their orbits in a particular direction. — In the conclusion of the sentence it is said, that the motion of the *Uniform* "causes that body which recedes most slowly from it, this being the swiftest motion, to appear nearest to it"; and this remark is intended to explain why, among heavenly bodies, the slower appear to overtake the swifter. Plato, as we have seen, conceived of the motion of the *Uniform*, or, rather, of the cause of this motion, as residing in that circle of the Mundane Soul which, extending from north to south, revolves from east to west, and becomes in its daily revolution coincident with every meridian. When he speaks of the nearness of a body to the motion of the *Uniform*, it would seem that he must mean its

of one to that of the other, fitted them together. Thus the Soul, interwoven in every

nearness to that circle. The proposition which he makes, being in effect that the body which recedes most slowly from it will appear nearest to it, is virtually an identical proposition. But, perhaps, what he had in mind was, that the slower body, having been passed by a swifter, while both are receding to the east from the circle of the *Uniform*, would remain nearer to that circle, and would consequently arrive at the meridian sooner, and would thus, as before explained, appear to have overtaken the swifter body in their daily revolution.

I have seen a reference to a passage of the *Epinomis*, as showing that Plato "had a distinct acquaintance with the general character of the planetary motions." But the *Epinomis* was, probably, not a work of Plato, but of a much inferior author; and the passage (p. 986, seqq.) is of no interest. It affords proof only of what, even in the time of the writer, must have been considered as the most elementary astronomical knowledge. The account of the planetary motions which I have formerly quoted (see before, p. 24) from the seventh book of the "*Laws*" may, perhaps, be reconciled, at least verbally, with that given in the *Timæus*, which we have been considering. In the tenth book of his *Republic* (pp. 616, 617) Plato gives another account of the astronomical system of the universe under the form of an allegory. But it has ever been the despair of his commentators. The glimpses of meaning that appear are rarer and fainter and more confused than those we have been following.

There is still another remarkable fact respecting the astronomical speculations of Plato. Notwithstanding that in the passage quoted above he ascribes a diurnal revolution to the heavens, yet it has been supposed that in another passage, which follows at no great distance (p. 40), he ascribes a diurnal revolution to the Earth. Whether he do so or not has been a matter of doubt and controversy from his own time. The decision of the question depends ultimately on the meaning which he intended to give to



part of it from the centre to the farthest heaven, and circumfused around it, and re-

an ambiguous word. He says, — “ But the Earth, our nurse, *rolling round* (or *conglobed round*, *ελλομένη*) the axis of the Universe, he (the Creator) formed to be the maker and preserver of day and night.” The last clause favors the supposition, that he *here* meant to ascribe to the Earth a daily revolution, though it may be otherwise explained. But, whatever were his meaning, he was understood as asserting, in this passage, the revolution of the Earth, by his disciple, Aristotle. (*De Cælo*, Lib. II. capp. 13, 14.) He is said to have held this opinion by the historian of ancient philosophers, Diogenes Laërtius. (Lib. III. § 75.) And Cicero, after mentioning the theory, that the heavens *do not revolve*, but that their apparent revolution is caused by that of the Earth, says, that “ some think that Plato has taught this in his *Timæus*, but rather obscurely.” (*Academic. Quæst. Lib. IV. § 39.*) Nothing can more evidently show the confusion and obscurity with which Plato expressed himself, and consequently the confusion and incoherence of his ideas, than the question which existed, Whether he did or did not virtually contradict himself in the compass of a few pages ; and the opinion asserted or suggested by the three writers whom I have mentioned, that such was the case. It is, at the same time, well deserving of remark, that no one of those writers takes any notice of the obvious inconsistency of the supposed meaning of the passage in question with what Plato elsewhere plainly asserts.

On Plato's allegorical exposition of the universe, before referred to, in the tenth book of the *Republic*, one of his most intelligent and judicious translators, M. Grou, makes the following tolerant observation : — “ We must not here look for astronomical precision and exactness. In narrations of this kind, which Plato employs from time to time to embellish his dialogues, he indulges much in imagination ; it is his object rather to please by poetical images, than to say what is true.”

But the essential foundation of all beauty in allegories, and in
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volving by its own motion, entered upon the divine commencement of a life always in action, full of intelligence, to continue for ever."

all poetical conceptions, is conformity to truth, actual or possible. An allegory which does not correspond to a real or conceivable state of things is but a pretended riddle without meaning.

The mind of Plato was mystical, — often conversant with unformed and incongruous conceptions, incapable of being definitely apprehended, which, as is the tendency of such minds, he mistook for important truths. Those conceptions he was naturally led to hide from too close examination by the use of terms in very loose and changeable senses, and by oracular and imperfect modes of expression, to which no intelligible and consistent meaning can be assigned. What, however, might now be fairly ascribed to incapacity in the writer is to be accounted for in Plato by the imperfect state of human knowledge in his time, and by the little progress that mankind had made in forming and defining abstract ideas, and in settling the significance of the language by which they are expressed. He was an explorer in new fields of speculation. His views were wide; he opened many subjects, and he is fertile in thoughts and imaginations. But his discussions are often unsatisfactory and evasive. He rarely explains himself clearly and fully. In attempting to be profound he becomes confused and obscure. A great part of his reasoning consists in the deceptive management of words, sometimes amusing from the dexterity with which it is performed, sometimes perplexing from the difficulty of understanding him, or, perhaps, from the difficulty of solving the puzzle which he propounds, but as often wearisome from its want of all real meaning or force. The time had not come when the questions which he raises could be properly treated. His morality is sometimes false from being overstrained, and sometimes, which was in part the fault of his age, grossly defective. Were it that of a modern writer in a Christian country, even this censure would be far too mild. His notions of religion, as may be supposed, were very imperfect. But, however



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It is unnecessary to show how unsubstantial is this phantom of a theory, and how slightly it is connected with any truth whatever. All is assumption without proof; reasoning is out of the question; it is a mere work of imagination; and the same character belongs generally to the dialogue in which it is found, as well as to much else that has been left us by Plato. In the speculations of Ptolemy the Valentinian, to which we are about to turn (*"quidquid male feriatum caput parturire potuit deliriorum,"* as they are called by a modern expositor of them*), there is nothing more unsupported by proof, or

great may be the deductions to be made from his character as a moral and religious teacher, yet his peculiar distinction consists in the high conceptions of morality and religion to which he often attained, and which he forcibly expresses. These charm us; and excite our wonder from their contrast with what was around him. It was, we may believe, the noble tone of sentiment sounding forth from his writings, that kindled the enthusiasm of Cicero: "Sequar igitur," he says, in commencing the third book of his own work on Laws, "Sequar igitur, ut institui, divinum illum virum; quem quadam admiratione commotus sæpius fortasse laudo quam necesse est." With this characteristic, Plato combined, as I have said, great fertility of mind, a style which, viewed, perhaps, relatively to that of other philosophers, was the admiration of antiquity, though some of its defects were recognized (as by Dionysius of Halicarnassus), and much of an artist's skill in the disposition and portraiture of the circumstances and characters of his dialogues.

* Massuet, in his first Dissertation on Irenæus, § 11. p. 5.

more remote from modern conceptions, than in some of those of the Athenian philosopher; on which, indeed, they were in great part founded. The early Christian writers, both catholic and heretic, have been treated unfairly in being separated from their predecessors and contemporaries, brought before the bar of modern criticism, and condemned for their violation of laws of thinking and reasoning which were unknown to their age, and which the most celebrated of heathen philosophers regarded as little as they.

“*Non magis licuit Valentino,*” says Le Clerc,* “*ex Ideis Personas facere, quam Platoni, et vulgaria prorsus aut etiam absurda caligine involvere, ut mira viderentur, nec expendi a quovis possent.*” — “Valentinus had no more right than Plato to transform Ideas into persons, and to involve trivialities and even absurdities in obscurity, in order to make them appear something wonderful, and to prevent ordinary men from passing judgment upon them.”* It is true that Valentinus had no more right to do so than Plato; but, perhaps, he had more excuse for doing so, since it would be idle to compare his

* Hist. Eccles. duorum priorum Sæculorum. An. 121. § 7. not. 20. p. 583.



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intellectual powers with those of the Athenian philosopher. But the meaning of Le Clerc does not, I conceive, lie on the surface. What he principally meant to express was, without doubt, the implication, that there are speculations of Plato as extravagant and unfounded as those of the Valentinians.

It is to be remarked, that the greater part of the passage which has been quoted from Plato relates to ideas of sensible objects, or to mathematical ideas;—to ideas in the conception of which absolute precision is easily attainable. The ideas of figures, lines, and motions are, in their own nature, perfectly definite. The case is wholly different with the abstract and complex ideas which belong to moral and metaphysical science. They have no external standard to which they may be referred. It requires great perspicacity to trace their outlines precisely, and to determine what should and what should not enter into their composition. Much watchfulness is necessary to preserve these shadowy abstractions and artificial combinations of thought unchanged during a process of investigation. Men often give the same name to conceptions which are essentially different, but have an illusory semblance of each other. When, therefore, we find a writer confused and

self-contradictory in treating what relates to physical and mathematical science, we may be assured that the same characteristics will exist in his moral and metaphysical discussions. If there is much incoherence in Plato's attempt to give an astronomical account of the system of the heavens, we cannot expect to find him more clear and satisfactory when he undertakes to treat of the *intelligible* world.

I have particularly adverted to Plato in this connection, because the speculations of the Gnostics were intimately allied to the Platonic philosophy, either as it existed in the writings of its founder, or as it had been modified by his followers. Plato's influence was, also, great over the minds of the catholic Christians; and much that they connected with their Christian faith was derived either immediately from him or from his representative, Philo. Nor is it difficult to account for his ascendancy. Whatever may have been his defects or inconsistencies, he had approximated nearer than any other of the ancient Greek philosophers to moral and religious truth, that is, to the doctrines of Christianity. If he had not maintained the truths which he asserted by any great cogency of reasoning, he had illustrated them by the splendor of his genius. Developing and

enlarging the conceptions which he had derived from Socrates, he was, as I have before observed, the great theological philosopher of heathen antiquity. No other heathen writer had like him insisted on the connection between morals and religion. He had taught that there was a divine moral government over the world, in reference to which life should be regulated and the character formed. He had inculcated a constant regard to the well-being of the thinking principle in man, the immortal soul, which might be raised to companionship with gods, or degraded to animate a brute; which might be made happy or miserable hereafter,—miserable by yielding to the appetites and passions, or happy by a life of philosophy and virtue.* It is not strange, therefore, that the

* It is, however, important to be observed, that Plato's doctrine of the immortality of the soul was essentially different from the Christian doctrine of the *personal* immortality of men. It was connected with the belief of the preëxistence of souls from the commencement of the universe, and of their frequent transmigration into different bodies of men and of inferior animals. With the belief of the preëxistence of the soul through a past duration, eternal or undefined, the belief of its future immortality, so far as it was held by any of the ancient heathens, seems to have been universally connected. It was also connected commonly, almost universally, with a belief in the transmigration of the soul. It was the prevailing doctrine of Plato, that, with the exception of some souls, who were fixed in a state of happiness or suffering

writings of Plato should have been highly esteemed by many of the fathers ; or that, among

by having become highly purified or greatly depraved, all those originally created, whose number was subsequently neither increased nor diminished, were continually animating in succession different bodies, and forming different beings. At the same time, he taught, that men, whose souls fell into neither of the two classes just mentioned, retained their personality for a certain period after death, during which they were rewarded or punished for their good or evil lives. When this period was finished, their souls returned to earth to constitute different individuals. From the region of the living there was a constant passage of souls to the region of the dead, and a constant return from it to the region of the living. As regards the generality of men, his scheme was wholly inconsistent with a belief in their personal immortality. Yet on conceptions which were thus imperfect, and which in his different works are not altogether consistent with one another, he has founded the most solemn exhortations to the practice of virtue, with reference to the well-being of the soul, and to the rewards and punishments of a future life.*

Thus, at the conclusion of the argument for the immortality of the soul which he ascribes to Socrates, as uttered on the day of his death, he represents his master as thus addressing the few friends who were gathered round him in his prison : — “ But, my friends, it is right to consider this ; that, if the soul be immortal, it needs our care not only as regards the present portion of time, which we call life, but as regards the whole of time ; and the danger may well appear very great, should we neglect it. If, in-

* Besides what is contained in the *Phædo*, the most important passages in Plato respecting the immortality of the soul, and the future state of individuals, are, I think, to be found as follows : — *Timæus*, pp. 41, 42. p. 90, seqq. *Phædrus*, p. 245, seqq. *Meno*, p. 81, seqq. *De Republicâ*, Lib. X. p. 608, seqq. *Gorgias*, p. 522, seqq. *Apologia*, pp. 40, 41.

the forms of philosophy which the age presented, that derived from him should have particularly recommended itself to the early Christians.

There was much connection, as I have said, between the speculations of the theosophic Gnostics and the Platonic philosophy. But those speculations were essentially founded on a doctrine which appears not to have assumed a distinct form in that philosophy till long after the time of Plato, and to have been of Eastern origin. It is the doctrine of the emanation of inferior beings from the Supreme. This doctrine is partially developed by Philo, and from him, perhaps, the Gnostics immediately derived it; as did the catholic Christians, in its application to the production of the Logos. But it is a doctrine which has spread over India; and it

deed, death were a deliverance from all things, it might be a gain for the bad to die, and, with the loss of the soul, to be delivered at the same time from the body and from their wickedness. But now since it appears that the soul is immortal, there is no other escape from evil, no other safety for it, except in its becoming as good and wise as possible. For the soul will go to Hades, having nothing but its discipline and instruction."

What marvellous words are these to come down to us from pagan antiquity! Be it Socrates or Plato who thus taught, "the counsel which he gave in those days was as if a man had consulted an oracle of God."

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was connected by the Gnostics with remarkable conceptions, which appear also in the philosophy of the Bramins. Some of them will be adverted to in what follows. They are conceptions which men placed in very different circumstances do not seem likely to have held in common without some communication with each other. But the channel of communication between the heretics of the second century and the philosophers of India has not been satisfactorily traced.

WITH these views of the general character of ancient philosophy, and of the influences acting upon the minds of the early Christians, both catholics and heretics, we will proceed to an account of the speculations of the theosophic Gnostics, and particularly of the theory of the Valentinian Ptolemy, in which they appear most fully developed.



CHAPTER VIII.

(CONTINUED.)

ON THE PECULIAR SPECULATIONS OF THE THEOSOPHIC
GNOSTICS.

SECTION II.

*On their Speculations concerning the Development of the
Deity, and the Spiritual World.*

Of the speculations of the theosophic Gnostics, the scheme of the Valentinians as modified by Ptolemy affords the best type or representative. It is particularly explained and dwelt upon by Irenæus. It exhibits the more remarkable features which appear to have been common to their systems. It presents us with the conception of a God far removed from the material universe; and of divine beings, emanant, not created, and, in common with all other spiritual existences, deriving their substance from him. But its most striking characteristic appears in the representation of those divine

beings as hypostatized attributes of God, or hypostatized Ideas of the Divine Mind.*

ACCORDING to the Ptolemæo-Valentinian system, the First Cause and First Father of all things dwelt in profound repose for infinite ages in heights invisible and unutterable. He was denominated *the Deep*.† With him was present, as his spouse, *Thought*, who was also called *Favor* and *Silence*. At a certain period, the Father determined to put forth from himself the commencement of all things. *Silence* became preg-

* The account that follows in this Chapter is derived from the first three chapters of the first book of Irenæus, except where some other authority is referred to. It involves conceptions borrowed from the philosophy of Plato and his followers, which I have elsewhere had occasion to explain. See "A Statement of Reasons for not believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians," pp. 299-308. I refer to this explanation, because the subject is foreign from our present modes of thinking, and may perhaps be better apprehended by being regarded from different points of view; and because in the work mentioned I have given authorities and arguments, which I have not thought it necessary to repeat, for some of the assertions in what follows. I shall hereafter refer to it by the title of "Statement of Reasons."

By *Ideas* in the Platonic philosophy are meant the archetypal forms of all things existing in the *sensible* world, which archetypes or Ideas are supposed to have eternally existed in the *intelligible* world, and to be not only the archetypes, but also the formative principles and essences, of all things in the sensible world. See before, p. 77. See also Additional Note, A.

† *Βυθός*.

nant through his power, and produced *Intellect*, like and equal to him from whom he was emanant, and alone able to comprehend the greatness of his Father. He was called also *the Only Son*,* *the Father*, and *the Beginning*† of all things. With him was likewise produced *Truth*, as his spouse. These four—four being a mystic number of the highest import with the Pythagoreans—formed the first Quaternity of *Æons* or *Immortals*, which is the root of all things.

IN this account, the three *Æons* or *Immortals* who are introduced together with the Deity, as well as all those *Æons* who will be mentioned hereafter, are to be considered, not as allegorical personifications, nor as representing only certain modes in which the undivided Deity may be regarded by man, but as proper persons. The derivative *Æons* are attributes of God hypostatized, permanent manifestations of God in personal forms, powers of God emanant, and acting externally, or archetypal Ideas of the Divine Mind endued with life. *Silence*, *Thought*, or *Favor* is to be viewed, at least in consistency with the system, as an attribute of the Deity,

* Or the *Only-begotten*, *Μονογενής*.

† Or *Principle*, *Ἀρχή*.

residing with him in a personal form. *The Only Son* or *Intellect*, and his spouse, *Truth*, and the other Æons hereafter to be mentioned, are only those attributes and Ideas developed, which had before existed, folded up, if one may so speak, in the Divine Mind. Without doubt, unintelligible combinations of thought are presented in this statement; and the theory is not to be comprehended, but can only be pictured before the mind as a fleeting show of changing and inconsistent images. The distinctness of a modern statement does it injustice, by withdrawing it from the doubtful light and mystical obscurity in which it originally appeared. But many theories that have been treated with greater favor and respect are equally exposed to the same disadvantage.

Each male Æon hereafter mentioned is, I believe, further to be considered as a development of some particular property of his immediate progenitor, the Æon from whom he emanates; and each female Æon is an hypostatized Idea of somewhat intimately connected with, or immediately resulting from, her consort.*

* "Feminam enim Æonem pariter esse oportet cum masculo, secundum eos, *quum sit velut affectio ejus*. Et hæc quum ita se habeant, et quum hæc dicantur *ab ipsis*," &c. Irenæus, Lib. II. c. 12. §§ 2, 3. p. 128. That this fact is only mentioned inciden-

In this last conception we perceive one of those remarkable coincidences which present themselves, between the theology of India and that of the Gnostics. "The Hindu goddesses," says Sir William Jones, "are uniformly represented as the subordinate *powers* of their respective Lords."*

In the Hindu theology we find likewise the strange conception, which appears in the scheme of the Gnostics, of assigning a spouse to the Supreme Being. "The worship of the female principle," says Professor Wilson, "as distinct

tally by Irenæus shows how imperfect is our information respecting the theories of the Gnostics in regard to all but their fundamental doctrines. Some further intimations of it are collected by Massuet in his first Dissertation on Irenæus. Irenæi Opp. P. II. pp. 16, 22. "Nothing," he says (p. 16), "is of more frequent occurrence in Proclus and others [of the Platonists], than gods, some male, some female, and some both male and female, where by the female are meant nothing but the powers and faculties of the gods, intimately adhering to them, through which they operate and produce their proper effects."

* Argument of Hymn to Sereswaty. — "Although," says Professor Wilson, "the general worship of the female personifications of the Hindu deities forms a class by itself, yet, when individualized as the associates of the divinities, whose energies they are, their adoration becomes so linked with that of the male power, that it is not easy even to their votaries to draw a precise line of distinction between them." "Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus." Asiatic Researches, Vol. XVI. p. 125. See also, to the same effect, Colonel Vans Kennedy's "Ancient and Hindu Mythology," pp. 189, 283, 317, seqq.

from the Divinity, appears to have originated in the literal interpretation of the metaphorical language of the *Vedas*, in which the *will or purpose to create* the universe is represented as originating from the Creator, and coexistent with him as his bride, and part of himself." He adds, that in the Sankhya system of philosophy, "Nature, *Prakriti* or *Mūla Prakriti*, is defined to be of eternal existence and independent origin, distinct from the Supreme Spirit, productive through no production, and the plastic origin of all things, including even the gods. Hence *Prakriti* has come to be regarded as the mother of gods and men, whilst, as one with matter, the source of error, it is again identified with *Máyá*, or delusion, and as coexistent with the Supreme as his *Sákti*, his personified energy, or his bride. These mythological fancies have been principally disseminated by the *Purá-nas*, in all which *Prakriti* or *Máyá* bears a prominent part."* We shall have occasion again to advert to the subject.

But it should be observed, that Irenæus incidentally mentions, that the Valentinians "sometimes represented the Father as united with *Silence*, and sometimes as raised above both the

* Sketch of the Religious Sects of the Hindus. Asiatic Researches, Vol. XVII. pp. 211-213.

male and female nature.”* Mysticism admits, or rather delights in, contradictions ; and it may appear useless to attempt to account for language which Irenæus has left unexplained. But it may seem probable that the Valentinians ascribed a commencement to the personal existence of *Silence*, as well as to that of the other *Æons*; and it is to be kept in mind, that their whole system of *Æons* is an account of the development of the Divine Nature, which, according to the notions of the Valentinians, might be viewed either in its essential unity, or as resolved into these different hypostases.

FROM these explanations and remarks we return to the detail of Ptolemy’s account of the Pleroma. The first Quaternity of *Æons* having been formed, the process of emanation went

* Lib. I. c. 2. § 4. p. 10. — In systems, like that of the Valentinians, which are formed out of allegories and metaphors petrified into doctrines, it is often difficult to determine how far the process has gone on. We cannot always readily distinguish in their language between what remains of a figurative character and what has hardened into an article of belief. But there seems no good reason to question that the Valentinians ascribed a proper personal existence to the spouse of God, as well as to their other *Æons*. On the contrary, when Philo, like Ptolemy, assigned a spouse to God, Wisdom (see Statement of Reasons, pp. 255, 256), it cannot be doubted that his language is metaphorical, though he hypostatized the Logos and other Powers of God.

on. The Æons continued to be emitted in pairs, one of each pair being male, and the other female. *The Only Son* (likewise called, it is to be recollected, *Intellect* and *the Beginning*), understanding the end of his production, which was to be the fountain of being, emitted the *Logos* (or *Reason*) and *Life*, the *Logos* being the Father of all who were to succeed him. This derivation of the *Logos* and *Life* the Valentinians maintained to be taught in the first verses of St. John's Gospel, pointing and rendering one passage differently from what we do. "In *the Beginning*," that is, said they, in *the Only Son*, one of whose names is *the Beginning*, "was the *Logos*, ... and what was formed in him was *Life*"; that is, *Life*, his spouse.* Perhaps, in the ostentation of superior acuteness, the Valentinians had refined upon the common doctrine, the doctrine of Philo, who derived the *Logos* immediately from God, and had thus interposed a new being between the *Logos* and God. But in these conceptions there was a remarkable coincidence between them and Origen. He explains the first verse of John in a similar manner. Following the Septuagint translation of the twenty-second verse of the eighth chap-

* Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 8. § 5. p. 41. *Doctrina Orientalis*, § 6. p. 968.

ter of Proverbs, which is to this effect :— “ The Lord formed me [Wisdom] *the beginning* of his ways to his works ” ; * and hypostatizing the wisdom of God, † he contends that the Logos was in *the Beginning*, because the Logos always existed in *Wisdom* ; and that he was not simply with God, but was so as being in *Wisdom*. On this doctrine he insists repeatedly in his Commentary on John. ‡ It may be remarked that a similar conception is found in Tertullian. The prophets and Apostles teach, he says, “ that Wisdom was first formed [by God] *the beginning of his ways to his works* ; and that the Logos (*Sermo*) was then put forth, by whom all things were made.” §

To go on with the system of Ptolemy ; from the *Logos* (or *Reason*) and *Life* proceeded another pair of *Æons*, *Man* and *the Church*. Here again, perhaps, appears an over-subtilty in separating what had been before united. For, according to Philo, the Logos was the archety-

* Κύριος ἔκτισέ με ἀρχὴν ὁδῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς ἔργα αὐτοῦ. In this passage, which Origen often quotes in his Commentary on John, he several times (according to his present text) gives the reading ὁδῶν instead of ὁδῶν.

† Comment. in Joannem. Opp. IV. 39, 40.

‡ Ibid. pp. 20–22, 47, et alibi.

§ Advers. Hermogenem, c. 45. p. 249.

pal Idea of man, "the man of God";* and a similar conception is found in Clement of Alexandria.†

The eight Æons who have been mentioned, namely, God, under the name of *the Deep*, and *Thought* (or *Silence*), *Intellect* and *Truth*, the *Logos* and *Life*, *Man* and *the Church*, formed the primitive Ogdoad,‡ which, according to Irenæus, was, in common with the first Quaternity of Æons, denominated "the root and support of all things." The Valentinians gave to it also the four names of the four male Æons; intending, as I conceive, thus to signify, that these are only different names of the same Being, as viewed with reference to his essential nature, or to his different hypostatized attributes. Thus Theodoret says, that "they affirmed the Ogdoad to be the First Æon," that is, God.§

But the production of the Æons did not stop here. Ten others besides *Man* and *the Church* emanated from the *Logos* and *Life*; and twelve from *Man* and *the Church*. This new genera-

* De Confusione Linguarum. Opp. I. 411, 413.

† Stromat. V. § 14. p. 703.

‡ "Ogdoad," from the Greek *ὀγδοάς*, here meaning *the Eight*.

§ Hæret. Fab. Lib. I. n. 7. Opp. IV. 198. The passage which I quote is obviously wrongly pointed and translated in Sirmond's edition.

tion of Æons appears to be another process of decomposition, in which the attributes of the *Logos*, the common progenitor of them all, are separated into distinct persons, the male Æons; while the female are hypostatized Ideas of something intimately connected with those attributes. All these Æons have significant names, which confirm, I think, the suggestion just made, but of which it is not worth while to give a translation. None of them reappears individually in the system, except the last female Æon proceeding from *Man* and *the Church*, who was named *Wisdom*; being, as I conceive, the hypostatized Idea of human wisdom. This Æon does, as will appear, play a conspicuous part in it.

Thirty Æons have been mentioned; and these thirty Æons formed, according to Irenæus, • the Pleroma of the Valentinians, that is to say, the Full Development of the Divine Nature. Four other Æons belong, as we shall see, to the system of Ptolemy; but these four, Irenæus says, were not considered as belonging to the Pleroma.* He argues against the inconsistency of their being excluded from it; nor does any reason appear why they were so. It is to be

* Irenæus, Lib. II. c. 12. § 7. p. 129.

observed, that they could have been separated from the Pleroma only when that was conceived of as the Development of the Deity. In the Pleroma considered as the Spiritual Realm of God they were undoubtedly included. But I strongly suspect that the statement of Irenæus is a misapprehension, founded perhaps on the fact that the Valentinians originally acknowledged the existence only of the thirty Æons who have been mentioned.* It is not probable that those who adopted the system of Ptolemy excluded the other four from the Pleroma, in either sense of that word. We shall hereafter see particular reasons to believe that they did not. But it is to be observed, that the Valentinian Æons are commonly spoken of as being thirty in number. After enumerating the Æons who have been mentioned, Tertullian says, — “This is that mystical Pleroma, the plenitude of the thirty-fold Divinity.”†

The mystery of the thirty Æons the Valentinians believed to be shadowed forth by the thirty years which our Saviour spent in private

* The Author of the Addition to Tertullian (c. 49) says, that “Valentinus fixed the number of Æons at thirty”; but that Ptolemy added others.

† “Hoc erit Pleroma illud arcanum, Divinitatis tricenariæ plenitudo.” *Advers. Valentinianos*, c. 8. p. 253.

before commencing his ministry; and by the parable of the laborers who were sent into the vineyard at the first, third, sixth, ninth, and eleventh hours, these numbers taken together amounting to thirty; and, according to Irenæus, they made similar use of all those passages in Scripture in which numbers are mentioned, so far as they could accommodate them to their system. Of their *Æons*, generally, they found abundant notices in the New Testament, where a modern reader, unacquainted with the original, would not suspect their existence; that is to say, in expressions where the Greek word *αἰών*,* *æon*, occurs. Thus they maintained that the *Æons* were often mentioned by St. Paul in the plainest manner, as, for instance, in his Epistle to the Ephesians,† where the words are rendered in the Common Version, — “Unto Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus, throughout all ages, world without end”; which words they understood as meaning, “To Him be glory, — throughout all the generations of the *Æon* of the *Æons*,”‡ that is, throughout all the generations of the first *Æon*, God.

* “Age,” often rendered in the Common Version “World.”

† Ch. iii. 21.

‡ *Εἰς πᾶσας τὰς γενεὰς τοῦ αἰῶνος τῶν αἰώνων.* Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 3. § 1. p. 14; where see Massuet’s note.

It is necessary to keep in mind, especially as we proceed, that we are treating of imaginations with which reason has nothing to do, and which cannot be brought into any coherence with one another. The derivative Æons are to be regarded, not merely as attributes of God, or as Ideas of the Divine Mind, but as distinct persons capable of individual acts; and as being, with the exception of *the Only Son*, not only imperfect, but fallible.

Thus, according to Ptolemy, in the development of beings from the Divine Substance, inferior to the Supreme, there was a commencement of imperfection, and consequent disorder, which finally led to the production of the material world. Of the immediate origin of this disorder the following account is given. The First Father, God, was comprehended by his first emanation, *the Only Son* or *Intellect*, and by him alone. He alone enjoyed the beatific vision of God. But all the other Æons felt the desire of obtaining the same knowledge; especially *Wisdom*, the last and youngest of the twelve, proceeding from *Man* and *the Church*. In her the passion became inordinate. She strove earnestly to comprehend the greatness of the Father, but it was impossible. The depths of his nature are unsearchable; and

she, urged on by strong love, would at last have been swallowed up in them, and lost, had she not been restrained and held back by an Æon not before mentioned, the Æon *Horos* or *the Boundary*. Being controlled by him, she returned to herself, gave up her purpose, and was restored to her place in the Pleroma.

The Æon just mentioned, *Horos* or *the Boundary*, was an emanation from the Father, through *the Only Son*. He was without a consort. His offices were to give stability to beings, and to separate them from each other, as by a rampart. In reference to his different employments many different names were given him, and among them, that of Σταυρός (*Stauros*), not in the sense of "cross," but in that of "rampart." Having, however, given him this name, the Valentinians had no difficulty in finding passages of the New Testament in which he was referred to, passages in which the word σταυρός, "cross," occurs. Several examples of such application are given by Irenæus. The Gnostics were able the more readily to find proofs and mystical intimations of their doctrines in the New Testament from the number of names which they gave to the same Æon, and from assigning (as we shall see hereafter) the same name to different Æons.

Wisdom was restored to her place ; but the agony of her passion had given birth to a shapeless female abortion, which was cast out of the Pleroma, and whose future fortunes we shall hereafter have occasion to follow. Then, in order to give stability to the Pleroma, and to prevent other *Æons* from suffering as *Wisdom* had done, *the Only Son*, under the direction of the Father, emitted a new pair, *Christ* and *the Holy Spirit*. The office of *Christ* was to give them such knowledge concerning their own nature, the Father, and *the Only Son*, as they were capable of receiving. All being placed on an equality, *the Holy Spirit* taught them thanksgiving and gave them true peace. Thus all corresponding to each other in form and mind, each male *Æon* became an *Intellect*, a *Logos*, a *Man*, and a *Christ* ; and each female, in like manner, a *Truth*, a *Life*, a *Church*, and a *Holy Spirit*.* “Ovid might have destroyed

* Hence it appears that *Christ* and *the Holy Spirit*, two of the four additional *Æons* of Ptolemy, belonged to the Pleroma considered as the Development of God. Nor is it probable, considering the mode of his derivation, that *Horos* was excluded from it ; nor that the *Æon Jesus* (to be immediately mentioned above), “the star of the Pleroma,” did not belong to the Pleroma in the highest sense of that word. It follows that there can be little doubt of the incorrectness of the assertion of Irenæus before mentioned (pp. 125, 126). I remark this principally as affording one

his *Metamorphoses*," says Tertullian, "if he had been acquainted with this greater metamorphosis." * In this account of the amalgamation, as it were, of the *Æons*, the conception, I suppose, discovers itself, that, notwithstanding their personal division, they are, under one aspect, included in the unity of the Father, as being his hypostatized attributes and Ideas; and that the *Æons*, though distinct persons, constitute but one Divine Being. This, considering all that precedes, it may be said, is an incredible imputation of absurdity on the Valentinians. Perhaps not. As we may talk of one infinite as being less than another, so we may talk of one doctrine, though utterly absurd, as being less absurd than another; and thus we may say that the doctrine of the Valentinians is less absurd than Pantheism, a theory which has found favor in modern times. By "Pantheism" I certainly do not mean the doctrine that God is in all things, with which of late some have attempted to confound it; but, using the word in its proper

among the constantly recurring proofs of the inaccuracy, imperfection, and inconsistency of the accounts of the Gnostics transmitted to us by the fathers.

* *Advers. Valentinianos*, c. 12. p. 255.

sense, I mean the doctrine that all things constitute the one God.

In return for the new blessing which they had received, the *Æons*, full of joy, agreed together each to contribute what was most excellent in himself, and, uniting all their gifts, to put forth in common a new *Æon* in honor of the Father. This being, who was the perfection, the star of the Pleroma, was denominated *Jesus* or *the Saviour*. He bore also the patronymic names of *Christ* and the *Logos*, and, with reference to the mode of his production, was likewise called *All* or *All things*. With him emanated angels of a like nature, as his attendants.

Of the sufferings of *Wisdom*, the last of the twelve *Æons* proceeding from *Man* and *the Church*, the Valentinians found a symbol in the apostasy of Judas, the twelfth of the Apostles, and in the suffering of Christ in the twelfth month (as they believed) of his ministry. The *Æon Wisdom* was typified also by the woman who, having had an issue of blood for twelve years, was cured by touching the fringe of the Saviour's garment, as *Wisdom* was restored upon touching the borders of the first Quaternity. To the *Æon Jesus*, one of whose names was *All things*, they applied various

passages of Scripture, specified by Irenæus, in which *all things* are mentioned. And thus, says Irenæus, they pervert to their purpose passages from the Gospels and Epistles, endeavouring to misinterpret them into proofs of their doctrine ; and not only so, but with much subtilty and cunning they make the same use of the Law and the Prophets, in which many things, being said allegorically, are capable, on account of the ambiguity of their meaning, of being diversely applied. The expositions of the Valentinians illustrate in some degree the intellectual character of their age ; but I have adduced them particularly for the purpose of showing what constant use they made of the Scriptures and especially of the Gospels.

SUCH, according to Ptolemy, was the commencement and derivation of existences inferior to the Supreme. It would be idle to attempt to settle all the questions that his scheme suggests, many of which, probably, he had not answered in his own mind, nor even proposed to himself. But there are several considerations that may serve to throw some light upon it.

IN the first place, then, the *Æons* were

formed of the substance of the Deity, as is implied in their being hypostatized attributes or Ideas of the Divine Mind. The conception of proper spiritual existence was not familiar to the minds of the ancient philosophers, and had as yet, it is probable, been attained only by a small portion of the early Christians. As we have seen, Ptolemy himself taught that the "substance of the underived Father was pure and uniform light";* and this imagination appears to have been common.† It facilitated the conception of the formation of other beings out of his substance. Before the introduction of Christianity, as has been already implied,‡ the doctrine of proper creation, or of causing that to be, the material of which did not previously exist, was unknown to the ancient philosophers. Matter, consequently, was regarded as uncreated and eternal. Those who were not, as the Epicureans, simple materialists, but believed, with Plato, in mind as a coëternal principle, contended only that the forms and modifications of matter were given to it by a superior power or powers. Primitive matter furnished the sub-

* See before, p. 61.

† See Additional Note, A.

‡ See before, p. 50.

stance of all things sensible. But in following out the same principle, the substance of spiritual beings came to be considered as the Infinite Spirit.

The doctrine, that the human intellect is a portion, or efflux, or emanation of the Divinity, has been very extensively held. The Stoics regarded it as a particle of that ethereal fire which was, in their view, the animating principle of all things, the universal Soul, God. Philo says that every human mind is allied to the Divine Logos (Intellect), being an impress, or particle, or ray of that blessed nature.* "The soul," he teaches, "proceeded from the Father and Ruler of All; for what he breathed into man was the divine spirit, sent here to dwell as in a foreign land."† How else, he asks, can we account for the wonderful powers of the human mind, "if it be not an *indivisible* portion ‡ of the Divine and Blessed Soul? For the Divine Nature is not divided and separated, but is only extended."§ The au-

* De Mundi Opificio. Opp. I. 35. The word "particle" does not express the force of the original term ἀπόσπασμα. See also Legis Allegoriæ, Lib. III. Opp. I. 119.

† De Mundi Opificio. p. 32.

‡ "Portion" Ἀπόσπασμα.

§ Quod Deterius Potiori insidiari solet. Opp. I. 208, 209.

thor of the Clementine Homilies says, that "the soul, proceeding from God, is of the same substance with him"; * that is, *consubstantial* with him, according to the technical language of theology. Justin Martyr says, — "We are allied to God, for the soul is divine and immortal, and a portion of the ruling Mind which sees God"; † that is, of the Logos. Some of the fathers who followed Justin adopted a similar doctrine, though it was earnestly opposed by Clement of Alexandria ‡ and others. I mention these facts to show that there was nothing foreign from the philosophy of the times in the supposition of the Gnostics, that beings of a higher order than man were formed from the substance of God.

It may be added, that the philosophy of the Bramins teaches that all finite minds are but portions of the Divine. Thus it is said in one of the Upanishads, — "As from a blazing fire thousands of sparks of the same nature proceed, so from the Eternal Supreme Being various souls come forth, and again they return into him." § The Gnostic Pleroma, with its

* Homilia XVI. § 16.

† Dial. cum Tryph. p. 145.

‡ Stromat. II. § 16. pp. 467, 468. Stromat. V. § 13. p. 699.

§ Rammohun Roy's Translation of the Moonduk-Opunishud.

Æons derived from the substance of God, is likewise coincident with the *World of Emanations* of the Jewish Cabalists, in which ten *Sephiroths* or *Splendors*, hypostatized powers of God, were conceived of by them as emanating, like the Gnostic Æons, from that eternal light, which they, like Ptolemy, regarded as constituting the substance of God.

THE derivative Æons were attributes and Ideas hypostatized ; how, then, are we to regard them in their new character as persons ? Concerning the manner of their production, and the mode of their existence, the Gnostics, according to Irenæus, did not explain themselves clearly, a fact which may be readily believed. He, therefore, undertakes to show that their doctrine must be false, whatever notions they might entertain on those subjects.* He supposes that the derivative Æons may be compared to rays emitted from the sun, or to branches shooting from a tree, or to torches lighted from one already burning. These are all illustrations which were used by some of the orthodox fathers to explain the emanation, or, as they called it, the generation, of the Logos

* Lib. II. capp. 12, 17.

from God ; — though their application to this purpose is virtually rejected by Irenæus.* It appears, also, that the Gnostics compared their *Æon Logos*, proceeding from the *Æon Intellect*, to *Logos*, that is, *discourse* (according to one sense of the term “*Logos*”), proceeding from the human intellect ; † which was another favorite figure of the fathers to represent the generation of the orthodox *Logos*. The further question is raised by Irenæus, Whether the *Æons* were to be considered as united with God after their emanation, or whether this was effectual and complete, so as to separate them from him, as the offspring of a man is separate from its parent. ‡ The epithet translated “effectual and complete,” he himself, though inconsistently with other passages in his writings, applies to the generation of the *Logos*. § The question last mentioned he leaves us to suppose was, like most of the others he suggests, unanswered by the Valentinians. He

* Ubi supra, et c. 13.

† Lib. II. c. 13. § 8. p. 131. See Statement of Reasons, p. 283, seqq.

‡ “An [emissi] *efficabiliter* et partiliter.” “Sed si quidem *efficabiliter* unusquisque illorum emissus est secundum hominum similitudinem,” &c. Lib. II. c. 17. §§ 2, 3. p. 138.

§ He calls it *efficabilis generatio*. Lib. III. c. 11. § 8. p. 190.

proposes still another, Whether the Æons were of the substance of the Divinity, or of a different substance. But this is evidently introduced rather for the sake of exhausting, by way of argument, all possible suppositions relating to the subject, than because any real doubt existed that the Gnostics believed them to be of the divine substance.

But, after all his discussion of the subject, sufficient reasons exist for believing that there were some imaginations of the Gnostics respecting the production of their derivative Æons, which Irenæus has not brought distinctly into view. There is no connection between our idea of emanation, or the flowing forth of one body from another, as a ray from the sun, and that of the ordinary production of animals. But, incongruous as these ideas are, the Valentinians, it appears, confused them together. This may be inferred from their introduction of female Æons; from their supposition that *Wisdom*, the last of the Æons, brought forth an abortive offspring without union with her spouse; * and especially from their account of the production of the first derivative male Æon,

* "Sine alterius complexu." Irenæus, Lib. II. c. 12. § 4. p. 128.

*the Only Son.** But there is other abundant evidence of the fact. Origen, in speaking of the orthodox doctrine, says that "the Father did not *emit* the Son, as some think." The term used by him is that which the Gnostics applied to the production of their Æons. "For," continues Origen, "if the Son were an emission of the Father, and the Father generated him from himself, as animals produce their offspring, it would follow that both the emitter and the emitted must be corporeal."† The doctrine of the *generation* of the Æons is presented, as I have before remarked, in a very gross form by a writer whom Epiphanius calls a Valentinian; and Clement of Alexandria, in exculpating the Valentinians of his time from impurity, does so on the ground that they supposed only a spiritual intercourse between the Æons.‡ Respecting the manner of their production, the Gnostics, probably, as others in like cases have done, used language in the hope that it contained some meaning, without

* See before, pp. 116, 117.

† Υἱοῦ γίνεται Πατήρ οὐ προβαλὼν αὐτὸν ὡς οἴονται τινες· εἰ γὰρ προβολὴ ἐστὶν ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ Πατρὸς, καὶ γενῆ μὲν ἐξ αὐτοῦ, ὅποια τὰ τῶν ζώων γεννήματα, ἀνάγκη σῶμα εἶναι τὸν προβάλλοντα καὶ τὸν προβεβλημένον. De Principiis, Lib. IV. § 28. Opp. I. 190.

‡ Πνευματικὰς ἐτίθεντο κοινωνίας. — See Vol. II. pp. 92, 93.

having themselves any definite imagination of what that meaning might be.

To the association of female Æons with male in the work of emanation we find an analogy in the religion of the Bramins, of which it is said to be a fundamental principle, "that an invisible and immaterial being cannot manifest himself or exert his power except under a corporeal form, and that the energies of the male must remain inoperative until rendered active by a union with the passive qualities of the female. Hence, on willing creation, the Supreme Being necessarily, in order to effect that object, first gave existence to a male and female, who are known under the names of *Purusha* and *Prakriti*, and which alone are considered to be the original agents in the formation of this universe." It is added, that these are "corporeal manifestations of his essence"; and "that all males, whether gods or men, are considered to be merely forms of *Purusha*, and all females, forms of *Prakriti*." * In different words, these are the hypostatized Platonic Ideas or generic forms, the one of all that is male, the other of all that is female.

* Kennedy's *Ancient and Hindu Mythology*, pp. 283, 284. See before, pp. 119, 120.

IRENÆUS objects to the Gnostic theories, that they were founded on conceptions concerning the human mind transferred to the Deity. The Valentinians, as he tells us, had formed notions of the properties, conditions, and acts of the mind of man, and, in their ignorance of God, ascribed them to the Father of All; making Thought to proceed from the Deity, Intellect from Thought, and Reason (the Logos) from Intellect. He argues against this decomposition of the Deity, and the supposed emission of those attributes as hypostases, in a manner which bore equally against the orthodox doctrine of the Logos as it existed in the second and third centuries. God, he insists, is altogether simple and uncompounded, wholly intellect, wholly reason [Logos], wholly light. But to suppose Intellect to have been emitted from him, so as to have a distinct existence, is to suppose God a compound being. Whence and where, he asks, was Intellect emitted? What space was there exterior to the Intellect of God into which it could be sent forth? * I thus quote his reasoning, in an abridged form, in order further to illustrate the speculations of the Gnostics, and, through those, the style

* Lib. II. c. 13. Conf. c. 14. § 8.

of speculation which existed in and after the time of the Gnostics.

Tertullian, in a passage formerly quoted, says that "Ptolemy numbered the *Æons* in classes, and gave them distinct names, assigning to them the character of personal existences, but external to the Deity; while Valentinus had included those existences in the totality of the Divinity as feelings, affections, and emotions." * It has been supposed that Tertullian, in these words, meant to assert that Valentinus did not hypostatize the *Æons*. But, if so, he would apparently contradict himself in two other passages; † and his account would be irreconcilable with that of Irenæus, ‡ with whom he elsewhere accords in his report of the Valentinian doctrines, and whom he evidently appears to have taken for a guide on the subject.

* See Vol. II. p. 91, note.

† *Advers. Praxeam*, c. 8. p. 504. *Advers. Marcion. Lib. I.* c. 5. pp. 367, 368. In these passages Tertullian represents Valentinus as attributing a proper personal existence to the *Æons*. Thus, in the first passage referred to, he says: — "*Valentinus probolas suas discernit et separat ab auctore.*" But he may, according to a use of language not uncommon in the fathers, have intended to denote the sect of the Valentinians by the name of Valentinus, and thus have ascribed to him individually opinions held only by his followers.

‡ Irenæus, *Lib. I. c. 11. p. 52, seqq.*

It may be, therefore, that Tertullian here ascribes to Valentinus an opinion mentioned by Irenæus (hypothetically, as one that might be entertained by the Gnostics), according to which the Æons were not properly emitted, but remained within the Father, as circles one within another, all surrounded by him.* But, whatever were the meaning of Tertullian in regard to Valentinus, there is no doubt that the theosophic Gnostics, generally, regarded their Æons as hypostases. In another place Tertullian describes them as Platonic Ideas,† a representation altogether consistent with the fact just stated. Philo, in like manner, gives the name of Ideas to the hypostatized powers of God, considering them as the formative principles of all things.‡

THE conception of hypostatized attributes and Ideas of the Divine Mind is one which has most extensively prevailed. Turning from the Gnostics, we perceive it in the speculations of the catholic Christians concerning the Logos and the Holy Spirit; in those of Philo

* Lib. II. c. 13. §§ 6, 7. p. 131.

† De Animâ, c. 18. pp. 276, 277.

‡ See Statement of Reasons, p. 262, seqq.

concerning the Powers of God ; in the Sephiroths of the Jewish Cabala ; and in the philosophy of the later Platonists. We discern it in the ancient Persian theology ; and it is displayed with the broadest extravagance in the religion of the Hindus. The coincidences between the speculations of the Hindus and of the theosophic Gnostics are very remarkable. Some of them have been merely touched upon. In the "Institutes of Menu," in the first chapter, the doctrine of emanation is unfolded into a scheme which bears a striking resemblance to that of the Valentinians, in its general character and in some of its details. In that work, which, though much less ancient, perhaps, than even some European scholars have supposed, has yet certainly for many centuries been regarded as of divine authority by the Hindu sages, the system presented is, to say the least, as remarkable as that of Ptolemy, for the extravagance of its imaginations, for the absence of any foundation in what is known or knowable, and for a series of conceptions from which it could not be inferred that reason is a faculty of the human mind.

IN the systems founded on the doctrine of

emanation, incongruous as they are throughout, there is nothing more extraordinary than the personal characters sometimes ascribed to the hypostatized attributes and Ideas of the Deity. They are not only represented as beings far inferior to God, a notion in which, however incomprehensible, the imagination may acquiesce, and by which the feelings are not shocked; but they are sometimes represented as ignorant, fallible beings, capable of suffering. Such they appear in the system of Ptolemy, particularly in the case of *Wisdom*, the last of the female *Æons*. In the popular religion of the Hindus the extravagance becomes outrageous; for the most abominable fables are related even concerning the three immediate manifestations of the Supreme Being, *Brahma*, *Siva*, and *Vishnu*. As regards the aberrations and sufferings ascribed to *Wisdom* in the Valentinian scheme, we may in some degree reconcile our imagination to them, if we conceive of this *Æon*, as we probably should, not certainly as the proper Wisdom of God hypostatized, but as the hypostatized Idea of human wisdom.

In this notion, that a being who is an hypostatized attribute or Idea of the Divine Mind may be capable of suffering, there was a strange coincidence — a coincidence where we might

least have expected it — between the opinions of the Valentinians and those of some of the more eminent early fathers. These fathers believed that the Logos, that is, the hypostatized Reason, or Wisdom, of God, was the proper sufferer in the sufferings of Christ.* The fact becomes the more remarkable, when we find that the theosophic Gnostics, though they agreed with the fathers referred to in the general principle, that an hypostatized being belonging to the Divine Nature might suffer, started wide asunder from them in this application of it, and maintained that the Divine Being or *Æon*, who was united with the man Jesus, did not suffer with him, but left him and returned to the *Pleroma* before the crucifixion. The Marcionites regarded the apparent body of Christ as a mere phantom incapable of suffering. In opposition to these doctrines of the Gnostics, those fathers insisted that the Logos himself truly suffered in the body in which he was incarnate. The doctrine was not at once universally assented to. Clement of Alexandria vacillates concerning it; and Origen did not adopt it. But, losing all sense and vitality, and growing into a shape still more monstrous, it finally prevailed; and its

* See Statement of Reasons, Section V. p. 62, seqq.

ghastly spectre still haunts the Christian world. The doctrine in its latest form, if we may give the name of *doctrine* to words utterly without meaning, is, that God himself suffered.

IN order to apprehend, as far as possible, the fancies of the Valentinians, it may be observed that their scheme of the Pleroma is a sort of allegory, blended with certain philosophical speculations of their age, and transformed into a system of opinions. A great part of it consists of figures of speech arrested and fixed as proper conceptions. That God, before the existence of other beings, dwelt alone with Thought, or Benevolence, or Silence ; that, in the production of those beings, his Mind (*Noûs*, Intellect) was first put forth and manifested externally ; that Truth is an eternal attribute of the operations of the Divine Mind ; that the Power by which all things are formed and disposed, *Logos*, or Reason, or the Disposing Power, proceeds from, or is a manifestation of, the same Mind of God ; and that this Power is the source of Life to all beings produced by it, are propositions sufficiently intelligible, though presenting an artificial and strange arrangement of conceptions. These propositions appear to form the ground-

work of the theory of the Valentinians. We next find them regarding the Logos or Reason of God as the archetype of Man, Man being formed in the image of God as regards his reason alone. Under this aspect the Logos becomes, as he is represented by Philo, the generic Idea of Man; and the great end of Man's being is to be united with the true worshippers of God, or the Church. We have here the first eight Æons, the primitive Ogdoad, of the Valentinians. Then follow the two series of ten and twelve Æons, in which, as we may conjecture, are respectively represented the attributes belonging to, and the effects produced by, the Logos, viewed first in relation to the universe, and afterwards in relation to the Church.

The Valentinians, however, would probably have been little satisfied with an explanation of their theory, which, throwing a part of it into the shade, and restoring, as far as possible, a figurative character to their language, should have converted it into nothing more than an obscure expression of common thoughts, unnaturally adjusted together. They professed, according to Irenæus, to teach "wonderful and unspeakable and deep mysteries, known only to themselves." * There is no doubt that they

* Lib. I. c. 1. § 3. p. 7; c. 4. § 3. p. 20.

spoke of their doctrines in terms which might have given sufficient warning that the subject was not one for the understanding to intrude upon; and that their mysteries were to be discerned only by the internal power of vision, which belonged exclusively to themselves as the spiritual.

SUCH was the system of the Ptolemæo-Valentinians respecting the Pleroma, or, in other words, respecting the Deity and his emanations. Systems very similar to it appear to have been held by most of the theosophic Gnostics. To enter into a detailed examination of their varieties, founded on the imperfect, questionable, confused, and contradictory information that remains to us, would be wholly foreign from our present purpose; and, were it not so, would be, for the most part, a useless and unsatisfactory discussion, repaying in no degree the toil of the inquiry. These visionary and baseless speculations were, from their nature, unfixed and changing. The system of emanations was continually receiving new modifications from the different individuals by whom it was adopted. "Many, nay, all of them," says Irenæus, "separate from the heresy in which they were, through a desire of being teachers,

and proceed to advance something new."* But generally the fundamental principles of the theosophic Gnostics, and their modes of philosophizing, were the same, and their variations from each other rarely appear to have been such as to make them an object of any interest or curiosity. According to an ancient proverb, quoted by Irenæus,† — "It is not necessary to drain the ocean to learn that its waters are salt." The proverb is applicable to many other speculations besides those of the Gnostics, and to many volumes that might otherwise present themselves before us in formidable array.

I HAVE, however, in the preceding part of this work, had occasion several times to mention the Basilidians; and though their peculiar opinions, so far as they may be learned or conjectured from such information as remains to us, throw but little additional light on the general character of the theosophic Gnostics, yet there are one or two questions concerning them of some interest. I shall, therefore, speak of them in a Note at the end of this volume.‡

* Lib. I. c. 28. § 1. p. 106. — See Vol. II. p. 34.

† Lib. II. c. 19. § 8. p. 144.

‡ See Additional Note, B.

BUT there is one other sect that may here deserve a brief notice. It is that of the Marcosians, of whose system Irenæus gives as full an account as of that of the Ptolemæo-Valentinians;* probably because, as he mentions, they prevailed particularly in his neighbourhood, on the Rhone.† Epiphanius has transcribed his account; but neither he, nor any other writer, affords any additional knowledge concerning them. They were a branch of the great body of the Valentinians. The general outline of their system of emanations was similar to that of Ptolemy. What was most peculiar to them was their connecting it with speculations, utterly unintelligible, concerning the mysterious powers and relations of words and letters. To these speculations an analogy, which we shall hereafter notice, may be found in the Jewish Cabala. They were allied also to the catholic doctrine concerning the Logos;‡ according to which the Logos, existing in God as his internal Reason or *Discourse* (conformably to a now obsolete signification of the word *Discourse*, in which it was synonymous with *Reason*), was generated by

* Lib. I. capp. 13 – 21. pp. 59 – 98.

† Ibid. c. 13. § 7. p. 65.

‡ Ibid. c. 14. § 1. p. 66.

him as a person, and became his uttered Discourse or Word.*

The system of the Marcosians is an object of some curiosity, as affording one of the most remarkable among ancient examples of the depths of mysticism (a term that, in philosophical language, is the euphemism for nonsense) into which the mind may sink, and there revel. As their speculations, which fill page after page in Irenæus, relate to Greek words and letters, it is difficult to detach a portion of them which may be clothed throughout in an English dress. But the following passage may suffice. Irenæus had before him some work or works, apparently of Marcus, the founder of the sect, from which he copied or abstracted his account; and he has given the words of his original.

“Know that your twenty-four letters are effluences, which present images of the three Powers that include the whole number of the elements above. Understand that the nine mutes are of the Father and *Truth*, because they are without sound; that is, unspeakable and inexpressible. But the eight semivowels are of the *Logos* and *Life*; because they are,

* See Statement of Reasons, p. 963, seqq.

as it were, intermediate between the mutes and the vocals (the vowels); and as they are effluent from those above them, so those below them bear a like relation to them. The vocals (vowels), being seven, are of *Man* and *the Church*. For a voice proceeding from the *Man* gave form to all things; for the sound of the voice clothed them with form.”*

In like manner with the Marcosians, and in the same spirit, the Jewish Cabalists, according to Basnage, discoursed of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. “Every letter,” they said, “has some relation to the Sephiroths or Splendors [the first emanations from the Divinity], or to the works of God.” Thus, for example, the first letter of the alphabet “indicates the inaccessible light of the Divinity. It is related to the first of the Sephiroths.” “It infolds likewise other great mysteries,” which it is unnecessary to detail. “The first ten letters answer to the ten Sephiroths, and the other letters have other uses.” “The world was created with reference to the Hebrew alphabet, and the harmony of the creatures is like that of the letters which God employed in composing the Book of Life. A certain assemblage of letters

* Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 14. § 5. p. 70.

causes the beauty and excellence of the universe; and, since the world was made with reference to the alphabet, certain things must necessarily be attached to every letter, and of these things it is the symbol and emblem." * Perhaps the mysticism of the Cabalists would be better brought out by saying, that in these things the letter exerts its power.

Besides the mysterious powers and relations

* *Histoire des Juifs*, Liv. III. ch. 11. Tom. III. p. 301, seqq. Ed. 1716. See also Ch. 13. — There is a truly remarkable analogy between the general notions of the Cabalists respecting the powers of the letters — an analogy extending even to some of the details into which they entered, as given by Basnage — and what is stated to be found in the Hindu Tantras. According to a writer in "The Friend of India" (Vol. III. p. 616), it is the doctrine of the Tantras concerning one of the Sanscrit vowels, that "it is an astonishing letter, it is bright as the shell of Vishnoo, it is full of the three gods and of the five souls; it is in fact Bhuguvutee herself." Of another letter it is said, — "The stroke on the left is Bruhma; the lower stroke is Vishnoo; the perpendicular line Shiva; the horizontal, Saraswutee; the curve is Bhuguvutee. The space in the centre is Shiva." "This letter bestows liberation; it produces wealth and holiness; it is the root of all letters; it is the feminine energy of nature, and the mother of all gods. In the upper angle resides the wife of Bruhma, in the middle angle Vishnoo's wife Jistha, in the lower Shiva's wife Roudree; it is the soul of all knowledge; the soul of the four casts, the origin of Bruhma's power to desire, of Vishnoo's power to know, and of the active energy of Shiva; therefore is it to be perpetually praised." — In this manner, it is said by the writer of the article from which I quote, are the character and qualities of all the vowels and consonants described.

of letters, Marcus likewise introduced those of numbers into his system. But speculations on the respective powers of different numbers were a common extravagance among the ancient philosophers from a very early period; — we might say from the time of Pythagoras, if the accounts of his life and doctrines were not, for the greater part, fabulous, so that little can be affirmed with confidence concerning him. Such speculations were fundamental in the philosophy of those who were called Pythagoreans, when Aristotle wrote.* Few subjects in ancient times have yielded a heavier crop of mysticism than what might be gathered from numerous writers concerning the marvellous powers and relations of numbers.

As is a common case, the pretensions of Marcus were as monstrous as his absurdities. There seems no reason to doubt, or to explain away, the account of Irenæus, according to whom Marcus affirmed, that “the first Quaternity of Æons, which is high above all, had descended to him, from places invisible and unspeakable, in the form of a woman, — for, he said, its masculine form the world could not

* Aristot. *Metaphysic.* Lib. I. capp. 5, 6.

support, — and revealed to him its own nature and the origin of all things, which it had never revealed before to any one of the gods or men.” *

Marcus himself, like Simon Magus and Apollonius of Tyana, appears to have belonged to the class of religious mountebanks, — individuals claiming extraordinary inspiration and marvellous powers, who were not very uncommon during the first two centuries of our era ; and who, with characters modified by the difference of circumstances, have shown themselves more or less conspicuously at other periods down to our own. According to Irenæus, who represents himself as speaking from personal knowledge, he was an impostor, a man of bad morals, and a pretender to magic.† He claimed, as we have seen, that a revelation had been made to him of a far higher character than that made to Christ. Such being the case, he may have imposed upon and deluded some Christians, who in becoming his followers may not altogether have forfeited their title to the Christian name. But there seems no doubt that a majority of his sect had no more

* Cont. Hæres. Lib. I. c. 14. § 1. p. 66.

† Lib. I. c. 13.

claim to it than the Carpocratians or the Ophians. The sect, indeed, appears to have been confined in its sphere, and short-lived ; for it attracted no attention from any other eminent writer besides Irenæus during the first three centuries.

HAVING, in what precedes, taken a view of the Gnostic Pleroma, as exhibited by Ptolemy, in its most perfect development, we shall now go on to the formation of things without the Pleroma, still following him as our guide.



CHAPTER VIII.

(CONTINUED.)

ON THE PECULIAR SPECULATIONS OF THE THEOSOPHIC GNOSTICS.

SECTION III.

On their Speculations concerning the Formation of the Visible Universe.

I PROCEED with the system of the Valentinians, as modified by Ptolemy.* In what follows I shall give merely its outline, for it would be useless to dwell on its detail, and shall state a few doubtful and unimportant points in the manner which seems to me most probably correct, without reference to the different opinions that have been maintained.

In consequence, as related in the last Section, of the sufferings of the *Æon Wisdom*, a

* The account which follows is derived from the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh Chapters of the First Book of Irenæus. The statements of Irenæus are confirmed in great part by the "*Doctrina Orientalis*." §§ 43 - 65.

female abortion was produced by her, that was cast out of the Pleroma. This offspring of *Wisdom* was formless, and devoid of comprehension, but had the spiritual essence of an *Æon*. She was raised (as we shall see) from her imperfect state, and was then called, after her mother, *Wisdom*; but seems more commonly to have been denominated *Achamoth*, a name derived from the Hebrew, signifying *wisdom*. The *Æon Christ*, taking compassion on her, extended himself for her relief over "the Boundary" * of the Pleroma. He gave her form and consciousness; but did not endue her with knowledge. He then withdrew and left her, that she might awaken to a sense of her deprivation in being separated from the Pleroma, and feel an eager longing after higher things. Accordingly, she strove to attain the light by which she had been deserted; but was restrained by the *Æon Horos*. Thus remaining alone, she became the prey of various contending passions, sorrow, fear, perplexity, accompanied by ignorance, and a yearning after him who had given her consciousness.

In these circumstances she implored a re-

* The *Æon Horos*. See before, p. 129.

newal of the favor of *Christ*; and he sent the *Æon Saviour*, or *Jesus*, to her assistance. This *Æon* separated the passions of Achamoth from her, and mingled them with and united them to primitive matter. Mingled with this, they became the essential forms of matter. At the same time, her yearning after *Christ* gave being to the substance of all souls, considered as not *spiritual*, but as rational. We have no word in English proper to describe this substance. I shall, therefore, denote it by a term borrowed directly from its epithet in Greek,* and call it "psychical."†

In this manner the elements of things were formed by the *Æon Saviour*, who is accordingly, in one sense, to be considered as the maker of the visible universe; the Valentini-ans applying to him the words of St. Paul, — "For by him were all things created, visible and invisible." Achamoth, in the mean time, had brought forth a substance of the same essence with herself, that is, spiritual. Thus three sorts of substances now existed without the Pleroma, — spiritual, psychical, and material. The Saviour gave instructions to Achamoth

* *ψυχικός*.

† Cudworth uses the epithet "soulish."

how to proceed in the work of creation, and departed.

Again left alone, she found herself unable to give form to the spiritual substance which she had produced. Taking therefore the psychical, she fashioned the immediate Creator of the world, the god of the Jews. Under the secret direction of his mother, of whose existence he was ignorant, and of whose guidance he was unconscious, he became the former of all animal and material things, the God and Father of the new creation. Through the operation of Achamoth, instructed by the *Æon Saviour*, there resulted a correspondence between the things without and those within the Pleroma; Achamoth, herself, corresponding to the Infinite Being, and the Creator to *the Only Son*.

The Creator made seven heavens,* each informed by an angel; he himself animating one, as I conceive, and being over all. There can be little doubt (as I have before observed†), that, in the conception of these seven heavens animated by angels, we find the common philosophical notion of the ancients respecting the seven heavenly bodies of our sys-

* Οὐρανούς.

† See before, p. 22.

tem, which they regarded as the glorious vehicles of divine intelligences ruling over the affairs of this world. But the Valentinians likewise considered those seven angels, together with Achamoth, as corresponding to the first Ogdoad of the *Æons*.*

Achamoth now dwelt in "the Middle Space" (perhaps the orb of the fixed stars) between the new heavens of the Creator and the *Pleroma*. The Creator was ignorant of the existence of any beings of a higher order than himself. Having only a psychical, not a spiritual, nature, he wanted power to comprehend what was spiritual. He fancied himself the origin of all things, the only God; and thus announced himself by his prophets of the Old Testament, through whom he said, — "I am God, and beside me there is no other."†

I pass over the account given by Irenæus of the notions of Ptolemy respecting the formation of the Devil, which we have before adverted to, and found occasion to regard as essentially incorrect.‡

* In this paragraph I depart, in some particulars, too unimportant to be dwelt upon, from the words of Irenæus, and give what, I suppose, must, from the nature of the case, have been the meaning of Ptolemy.

† See before, pp. 5, 6.

‡ See before, p. 59, seqq.

We come, therefore, next to the creation of Adam. First, an *earthy* substance was formed by the Creator, not, however, of the dust of the earth, but of invisible, floating matter. This was a soul, or principle of life, similar to that of brutes. Into this vehicle the Creator breathed a rational (psychical) soul of the same essence with himself; and the whole was afterward clothed with a covering of flesh, a body formed of the earth. But into the rational soul which proceeded from the Creator, Achamoth, unknown to him, infused a portion of the spiritual substance which she had produced, a leaven of immortality, a spirit.

From Adam, thus formed, proceeded three races of men, corresponding to the three parts of his *incorporeal* nature; the *earthy* and irrational, as Cain; the *psychical*, or rational, as Abel; and the *spiritual*, as Seth; the spiritual principle being always derived from Achamoth. The first are, from their nature, destined to perish; the second have the power of choice, and, as they incline themselves to good or evil, may be saved or lost; the last, as spiritual, are secure of obtaining the blessedness of the Pleroma. To this class the theosophic Gnostics regarded themselves as belonging. From their spiritual nature, which was

superior to that of the Creator, they were capable of understanding the mysteries which they taught, and of which he had been ignorant. Other Christians belonged to the second class. These were to attain salvation by simple faith and good works.

In reference, I suppose, to the communication by Achamoth of the spiritual principle to men, by which they became inspired, the name "Holy Spirit" was given her by the Valentinians.

To remedy the disorders and evils of which he himself was sensible, the Creator had determined to send a Saviour. Him he had predicted by the Jewish prophets. But to restore the order of the universe, a higher interposition was necessary than that of the Creator. At the baptism of his Christ, the *Æon Saviour* descended into him in the form of a dove, and became the true Saviour of the world.

In the consummation of the present state of things, Achamoth will be restored to the Pleroma; and the Creator will take her present seat, "the Middle Space." The spiritual, or rather their *spirits*, divested of their *souls*, will enter the Pleroma, and be united as brides to the angels attendant on the *Æon Saviour*.

The rational (psychical), who have secured their salvation by faith and good works, will enter the future realm of the Creator, where, likewise, the *souls* of the spiritual will remain.

From the first, those souls which had received the spiritual seed, implanted by Achamoth, had manifested their superiority over all others. Though the Creator was ignorant of the cause of their excellence, they were objects of his peculiar favor. He constituted them prophets, priests, and kings. Thus the words uttered by his prophets (the Jewish prophets) did not all proceed from the Creator; that spiritual principle, which he could not give, spoke in them. Their declarations, therefore, are to be divided into two classes, according to the source from which they proceeded. In like manner, the words uttered by the man Jesus sometimes proceeded from the *Æon Saviour*, sometimes from the spiritual principle derived from Achamoth, and sometimes from the Creator.

But, though the operations of the spiritual principle in men had been remarked by the Creator before the descent of the *Æon Saviour* from the Pleroma, and though he had been moved by these appearances, yet he treated them with neglect, and imagined various causes

for the effects produced. "When, however, the Saviour came, he learned all things from him, and, with his whole attendant host, joyfully welcomed him. The Creator was typified by the Centurion in the Gospel, who says to the Saviour, *For I also have soldiers and servants under my authority, and they do what I command.* He will carry on the government of the world, as long as is requisite, especially for the purpose of taking charge of the Church; and likewise with a view to the reward prepared for him, with which he has been made acquainted, a removal into the place where his mother dwells." The Valentinians also affirmed, "that Simeon, who *took Christ in his arms and gave thanks, and said, Lord, now dost thou dismiss thy servant in peace, according to thy word,* was a type of the Creator, who, upon the coming of the Saviour, was made aware of his own future translation, and gave thanks to the Unknown God."*

* The words above quoted are taken from Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 7. § 4. pp. 34, 35; and Lib. I. c. 8. § 4. p. 40. Tertullian gives the same statement, *Advers. Valentin.* c. 28. p. 260. It corresponds, likewise, with what Origen (*Comment. in Joan. T. 13. Opp. IV. p. 274, seqq.*) has quoted from the Valentinian, Heracleon, and with what is found in the *Doctrina Orientalis* (§§ 62 - 65). I re-

After what has been already said, the scheme explained in this Chapter affords no occasion for any particular remark. But it may be observed, that the Valentinians adduced in its support many passages from the Gospels and Epistles, in which, after the fashion of their day, they found a hidden sense. Of the manner in which they used such passages the application of those just quoted affords a favorable specimen.

WE have, thus, gone over those opinions of the theosophic Gnostics which it is necessary to consider apart. We will next attend to the opinions both of the theosophic Gnostics, and of the Marcionites, concerning the person of Christ, which may best be viewed in connection with each other.

fer to these authorities, because the account of Mosheim, in his *Commentarii de Rebus Christianorum*, which is similar to that given by him in his *Ecclesiastical History*, is altogether erroneous. After speaking in the former work (p. 384) of the union of the *Æon Jesus* with Christ (the Christ of the Creator) he says: — “This divine man strenuously attacked the tyranny of the Creator of the World and his associates, by discourses, miracles, and invectives; and taught men the knowledge of the Supreme Divinity, and the means of procuring the salvation of that soul in which are the senses and lusts. Exasperated by this, the Architect of the World caused him to be apprehended and crucified.” — See before, p. 8, note.



CHAPTER IX.

ON THE OPINIONS OF THE GNOSTICS CONCERNING THE PERSON OF CHRIST.

THE Gnostics generally believed that Christ had not a proper body of flesh and blood. This belief, as I have already said, was a consequence of their opinion respecting the evil nature of the body.* A proper human body was thought by them inconsistent with the perfect purity of the Saviour. But the Marcionites and theosophic Gnostics, while they agreed in this fundamental doctrine, differed in their other opinions respecting his person.

The nativity of Christ was denied by Marcion. He regarded it as wholly unworthy of the Divine Saviour to have passed through all the circumstances attendant on birth and infancy.† Christ, according to him, was the Son, the Spirit, the Power, the Messenger,

* See before, p. 59.

† Tertullian. *Advers. Marcion. Lib. III. c. 11.* pp. 402, 403.
De Carne Christi, c. 4. p. 309.

the Christ, of the Unknown God.* The gospel used by Marcion was that of Luke mutilated by him;† and, rejecting all the previous history, he began with the appearance of the Saviour in the synagogue at Capernaum. He was then manifested in this inferior world, not a man, but a divine being.‡ His apparent body was a mere phantom. A human body, besides its corrupt nature, must have been derived from the Creator, with whom Marcion (unlike the theosophic Gnostics) maintained that his Christ had nothing in common. He taught, that the Creator had promised to his peculiar people, the Jews, a Messiah of his own; but that the advent of this Messiah had been anticipated, and his place preoccupied, by the manifestation of the Unknown God in Christ.§

Apelles, a disciple of Marcion, though he denied the nativity of Christ, held that he had a real, but not a human, body.|| So far

* Tertullian. *Advers. Marcion.* Lib. III. c. 3. p. 397. Lib. IV. c. 21. p. 436.

† See Additional Note, C.

‡ Tertullian. *Advers. Marcion.* Lib. IV. c. 7. pp. 416, 417. c. 21. p. 436.

§ See before, p. 9.

|| Tertullian. *De Carne Christi*, c. 6. p. 311. *Advers. Marcion.* Lib. III. c. 11. p. 403.

as we may conclude from our imperfect information, the generality of the theosophic Gnostics admitted, in like manner, the reality of his body, and, with this, his nativity also in a certain sense. Many of them appear to have adopted the essential features of a scheme often brought into view by Irenæus.* According to this scheme, the *Æon Saviour* (who, it is to be remembered, was also called *Christ*) descended from the Pleroma into the Messiah of the Creator, the seeming man Jesus, at the baptism of the latter, and through him announced the Unknown God. In speaking of this complex being, the *Æon* seems to have been commonly called *Christ*; the man, *Jesus*. Jesus having been intended by the Creator for his Messiah, his body had been prepared, in a wonderful manner, of the psychical substance, so as to be free from all the impurities of matter. His *soul* was derived from the Creator; but there was a spiritual principle within him (a spirit) furnished by Achamoth. As regards his nativity, he passed through Mary, his mother, as water

* Cont. Hæres. Lib. I. c. 6. § 1. pp. 28, 29. c. 7. § 2. pp. 32, 33. c. 9. § 3. p. 45. Lib. III. c. 2. § 2. p. 175. c. 9. § 3. p. 184. c. 10. § 4. p. 186. c. 11. §§ 1, 3, 7. pp. 188 - 190. c. 16. p. 204, seqq.

through a conduit, without receiving any thing from her substance. When taken before Pilate, the *Æon Christ* left him. The spirit furnished by Achamoth likewise left him at his crucifixion; and only the psychical part of the complex Saviour, the body and soul of Jesus, suffered.

The opinion of the theosophic Gnostics concerning the body of Christ, as not a proper human body, though one capable of suffering, was an hypothesis in no way affecting the historical accounts of him. But it may be thought that the doctrine of the Marcionites, who conceived of his apparent body as a phantom, must have led them to reject much that is related in the Gospels.

As I have mentioned, Marcion denied the nativity of Jesus, and rejected, in consequence, the first three chapters of Luke's Gospel, the only gospel which he used. But he did not call in question the actions, miracles, and apparent sufferings of Christ, as recorded by the Evangelist. He viewed those accounts as a true narrative of what appeared to the senses of men. Regarding the supposed prophecies of the Old Testament concerning the Jewish Messiah as inapplicable to the true Christ, he relied on his miracles alone as proof of his

divine authority. In his view, no order in successive dispensations of the Supreme God, no preparation for the coming of his Christ, was required. "You affirm," says Tertullian, "that no order of that sort was necessary, as he was immediately to prove himself by facts, by the evidence of his powers, to be the son and messenger and Christ of God."* Marcion, likewise, received the accounts of the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Christ, equally with the accounts of the transactions of his ministry. His admission of the truth of this part of the Gospel history is often referred to by Tertullian. Marcion, indeed, reasoned from it to prove that the Christ in whom he believed was not the Messiah who had been promised to the Jews by their Creator-god; "denying that it had been predicted that the Christ of the Creator should suffer on the cross, and arguing further, that it was not credible that the Creator should subject *his* son to that kind of death on which he had himself pronounced a curse; saying, *Cursed is every one who has hung on wood.*"†

* Advera. Marcion. Lib. III. c. 3. p. 397.

† Ibid. Lib. III. c. 18. p. 407. — The quotation from the Old Testament, which I give conformably to the words in Tertullian (*Maledictus omnis qui pependerit in ligno*), is to be found in

In different passages, Tertullian insists that there was no reason why Marcion should deny the nativity of Christ, on the ground of its being unworthy of the divine nature to be born, seeing that he admitted his crucifixion.* Referring to, and misapplying, the words of St. Paul (to which, as I have before said,† he often appealed), "God has chosen the foolish things of this world to confound the wise," he maintains that it was not more foolish, in the view of human wisdom, for a divine being to be born than to be crucified. According to Marcion, he says,‡ "the nativity of Christ is dishonorable to God, and unworthy of the Son of God, and foolish." "But *God*," he replies, "*has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise*"; and he then proceeds to speak thus of the crucifixion.

"Clearly, there are other things as foolish, relating to the contumely and sufferings endured by the divine nature. Or shall I call it agreeable to reason, that a divine being should

Deuteronomy xxi. 23. This passage is also used by St. Paul, Galatians iii. 13.

* Besides the passage to be immediately quoted, see *Advers. Marcion. Lib. III. c. 11. p. 403.*

† See Vol. II. pp. 256–259.

‡ *De Carne Christi*, capp. 4, 5. pp. 309, 310.

be crucified? * Expunge this, too, Marcion; or, rather, expunge this in the first place. For which is more unworthy of a divine being, which is more shameful, to be born, or to die? to bear about flesh, or to bear a cross? to be circumcised, or to be pierced with nails? to be brought forth, or to be buried? to be laid in a manger, or in a tomb? You would be wiser, if you disbelieved all this likewise. But you will not be wise, unless you become a fool to the world by believing the foolish things of God. Have you spared the account

* "Sunt plane et alia tam stulta quæ pertinent ad contumelias et passiones *dei*. Aut prudentiam dicam [*non dicant*] *deum* crucifixum?" — To translate the word *deus* by our word *God*, in these and subsequent passages of this extract, would be imputing to Tertullian a sense which he would have regarded with horror. See his work *Adversus Praxeam*, *passim*. See also Vol. II. p. 252, seqq. — "Sermo Dei," says Tertullian, "*deus, quia ex Deo, non tamen ipse ex quo est.*" "The Logos of God is a *divine being* [*verbally* God] because he is from God, yet he is not that being from whom he is." *Advers. Praxeam*, c. 26. p. 515.

It was with very indeterminate, inconsistent, and changing conceptions, that Tertullian, and the other early fathers, applied the name *god* to the Logos or Christ, whom, as a person, they regarded as far inferior to God. But they gave him this name on the ground of his being an attribute of God, his deriving, as a person, his substance from God, and his acting as the minister and representative of God. I have had occasion elsewhere (*Statement of Reasons*, pp. 280, 281) to advert to this subject. See Additional Note, D.

of the sufferings of Christ, because, being a phantom, he felt them not? I have already said, that he might equally submit to the empty indignities of an imaginary birth and infancy." *

* Though it is not necessary to my purpose, I am tempted to pursue the quotation a little farther. The passage is a remarkable one. Tertullian goes on thus: — "But now answer me this, destroyer of the Truth! Was not the divine Saviour really crucified? Did he not really die, as he was really crucified? Was he not really raised again to life, as he really died? Did Paul falsely determine to know nothing among us but Jesus crucified? * Did he falsely teach that he was buried, and falsely insist on his resurrection? Then our faith is false; and all we hope from Christ a phantom. Most wicked of men! Excuser of deicides! For Christ suffered nothing from his enemies, if he did not really suffer. Spare the only hope of the world, thou destroyer of the necessary dishonor of the Faith.† Whatever was unworthy of a divine being was for my good. I am safe, if I am not ashamed of my Lord. *Of him, he says, who has been ashamed of me will I be ashamed.* Fortunate in my want of shame,‡ happy in my folly, I find nothing else which can put me to the blush. The Son of God was born; § — it is shameful, and, therefore, I am

* Rigault gives this sentence thus: — "*Falso ergo statuit inter nos scire Paulus tantum Jesum crucifixum.*" Instead of "*Falso ergo statuit,*" I adopt the reading "*Falso statuit,*" and understand this and the following sentence as interrogative.

† Rigault's text is, — "*Quid destruis necessarium dedecus fidei?*" Instead of "*Quid destruis,*" I adopt the reading "*qui destruis,*" without an interrogation.

‡ For "*bene imprudentem,*" I adopt the reading "*bene impudentem.*"

§ For "*Crucifixus est Dei filius,*" I adopt the reading "*Natus est Dei filius.*"

BEFORE quitting this subject, we will take notice of a remarkable passage of Origen, in

not ashamed of it. And the Son of God died ; — it is altogether credible, because it is absurd. And he was buried and rose again ; — it is certain, because it is impossible."

The meaning of Tertullian in the last sentences may be thus explained. God, he argues, has, through the Apostle, avowed that he has chosen what is foolish in the view of men to confound the wise. Do you, then, refuse to admit the nativity of Christ, because it may seem to you dishonorable for the Son of God, the Divine Saviour, to be born ? Or is his *real* crucifixion to be disbelieved, because it may appear absurd to men to assert that such a being died ? Or is the proper fact of his resurrection to be rejected, because it may appear impossible to men that a dead body should return to life ? On the contrary, these things, including his nativity, are in truth the foolish things which God has spoken of as characteristic of his dispensation. I believe them the more firmly, because, so far as they seem to men dishonorable, foolish, and impossible, so far they coincide with the avowed purpose of God. They bear the very character which he has ascribed to the means used by him to confound the wise. What are those foolish things, Tertullian asks immediately before, to which the words of the Apostle may apply ? " The conversion of men to the worship of the true God ! the rejection of error ! the forming of men to righteousness, chastity, patience, mercy, innocence ! — These are not foolish things. Search out what the Apostle referred to, and if you have reason to suppose that you have found it, then it will no longer seem foolish to you to believe * that a divine being was born, and born of a virgin, and with a body of flesh."

The words, " Certum est, quia impossibile," " It is certain, because it is impossible," have been often quoted, with some change (" Credo, quia impossibile," " I believe, because it is impossi-

* For " non erit tam stultum quam credere," I adopt the reading, " non erit jam stultum credere."

which he in some degree countenances an opinion quite as extraordinary, to say the least, as that of the Marcionites. It is found in the Latin translation of his Commentaries on Matthew.* But there can be no reasonable doubt that it was originally written by him, not interpolated by his translator. He is commenting on the fact, that Judas, when betraying his master, pointed him out by a kiss to those who accompanied him; the fact being considered by Origen as implying that they might not otherwise have known his person.† His words, considerably abridged, are as follows:—

“A tradition has come down to us, that

ble”), ironically, with a cast of ridicule on Tertullian. In the last sentences adduced from him, his vehement eloquence has broken down the common barriers of language; but it seems to be treating him hardly, to give a verbal meaning to his overbold and very concise expressions, in order to convert them into absurdities.

The whole passage is one of the many, before referred to (See pp. 146, 147), in which he, Justin Martyr, and Irenæus express clearly and strongly their belief of the sufferings of the Logos.

* Series Comment. in Matth. § 100. Opp. III. 906.

† Many of them probably did not know his person, as Jesus during his ministry was but very little, comparatively, at Jerusalem; others might not readily have distinguished him by the light of the moon, mingled with that of torches and lanterns.

Jesus had not only two forms, that in which he was seen by all, and that in which he was seen by his disciples at his transfiguration ; but that he appeared to every one in the form of which he was worthy ; and that (at times) when present, he appeared to all like another person.* Thus he resembled the manna, which had a different taste for different individuals, accommodated to every man's liking.† And this tradition does not seem to me incredible. But if it were so, we may explain why the multitude who accompanied Judas, though they had often seen Jesus, nevertheless needed some one familiar with him to point him out to them, on account of the changes of his form."

This extraordinary tradition does not appear to have dwelt on the mind of Origen ; for he never elsewhere mentions it in his remaining works ; but it presents a conception that may seem even stranger than that of the Marcionites.‡ The passage, however, well de-

* "Sed etiam unicuique apparebat secundum quod fuerat dignus. Et cum fuisset ipse, quasi non ipse omnibus videbatur."

† This notion respecting the manna was derived by Origen from what is said in the Wisdom of Solomon, ch. xvi. 20, 21.

‡ The story referred to by Origen is likewise mentioned by Photius (in the ninth century), as having been found by him in a

serves attention ; especially in connection with their doctrine, — which existed before the middle of the second century. Taken together, they serve to show with what fables and strange imaginations the history of Jesus would have been mingled, had it not, at an early period, been fixed in its true form by the authentic records of his contemporary disciples. They are among those collateral evidences (hereafter to be discussed) which, taken alone, afford irresistible proof that the Gospels were not compilations of a later period than that assigned for their origin. If the histories of Christ had been founded upon traditions existing among the Gentile Christians after their separation from the Jewish Christians, that is, after the apostolic age ; then, instead of bearing the character which they now have, they would have been not only irreconcilable with each other, but disfigured by such traditions as that preserved by Origen, and such conceptions as that of Marcion. The growth of fables respecting our Saviour, which was blasted by

book called “*Circuits (Περίοδοι) of the Apostles*,” professedly written by an author of the name of Leucius Charinus. In that book it was connected with the opinion of the Marcionites, and subsequently of the Manichæans, that the apparent body of Christ was only a phantom. Photii Bibliotheca, col. 292. Ed. Schottii.

the existence of the Gospels, would have been rank without it ; and each compiler of a history would have selected from relations true or false what was accommodated to his own belief or imaginations respecting Christianity and its founder. Marcion, for example, instead of mutilating, as he did, the Gospel of Luke, and using that alone, would have constructed a gospel of his own, much more favorable to his opinions than any thing he could derive from Luke.

WE will next consider what were the views of the Gnostics concerning the general design of Christianity, or, in other words, the purpose of the interposition of the True God by Christ.

CHAPTER X.

ON THE OPINIONS OF THE GNOSTICS RESPECTING THE DESIGN OF CHRISTIANITY.

THE subject of this Chapter, however important to be attended to, in order that we may form a correct estimate of the Gnostics, requires little explanation or discussion. It does not appear that the Christian Gnostics, as a body, differed *essentially* from the catholic Christians in their general views of the design of Christianity. We, accordingly, have no remains of any controversy between the two parties concerning this subject.

It may, or may not, be regarded as a qualification of these remarks, that the theosophic Gnostics were distinguished from the catholic Christians by maintaining the doctrine of the natural division of men into three classes, one secure of future blessedness in the Pleroma, another to be rewarded or punished by the Creator according to their deserts, and the third formed to perish.* But they ascribed (I speak

* See before, p. 164.

of the more respectable and sober of their number) a moral efficacy, and, as far as appears, a moral efficacy alone, to the Christian dispensation. It was, in their view, a manifestation of the Unknown God, of the True God, to reveal himself and his purposes to men, to deliver them from the power of moral evil, and to form "the spiritual" and "the rational" (psychical) for the happiness of which they were respectively capable.

The doctrine, that "the spiritual" were, by their nature, secure of future blessedness, was undoubtedly liable to be greatly abused; and, considering the condition of the times, we have no reason to doubt that in many individuals it led to such irregularities as were charged on the theosophic Gnostics. Doctrines different from it in form, but the same in effect, have prevailed in modern times; and in periods of great excitement, as in Germany at the time of the Reformation, and among the fanatics in England in the seventeenth century, they have been followed by like disastrous consequences. But, during ordinary seasons, other principles and other influences, acting upon the minds of those by whom they are held, oppose and control their dangerous tendency.

It does not appear that the Marcionites

adopted the notion of the theosophic Gnostics concerning the natural division of men into three classes. This world they regarded as evil; its ruler as of a character diverse from, and, in some respects, contrary to, that of the Supreme God; and all connection with it through the pleasures of the senses as polluting. In their view, the Supreme God had interposed to enable men to deliver themselves from the realm of the Creator, and to attain to a far better state. This deliverance was to be effected by cultivating their spiritual nature, by the practice of Christian virtue, and, especially, by what, in their opinion, formed an essential part of it, ascetic morality, and an abstinence from worldly pleasures. Thus were men to separate themselves from the world and its ruler. The *Good* God did not punish; but with regard to the final lot of those not admitted to his spiritual world, our information is too imperfect to enable us to complete the scheme of Marcion.

THE belief of the theosophic Gnostics, that the Æon Christ left the man Jesus before his crucifixion, and that of the Marcionites, that the seeming body of Christ was a phantom, incapable of suffering, make it evident that they could have had no notion of the doctrine

of Atonement as it appears in modern creeds, a doctrine which theologians have represented as the distinguishing feature of Christianity. But on this subject there was no controversy between them and the early catholic Christians, to whom the doctrine was equally unknown.

THE theosophic Gnostics have been compared with those religionists in our own times, who maintain that the objects of faith may be felt, or may be discerned, by each individual mind, without the aid of Revelation, the belief in which they consequently reject. But the spiritual intuition, claimed by the Gnostics for themselves alone, had no agreement with this doctrine. It corresponds rather to the exclusive pretension to a supernatural faith, which many other Christian sects have set up since their time. From those modern religionists the Gnostics were likewise very widely separated by the fundamental distinction, that they recognized in Christianity a character altogether supernatural. They regarded it as a manifestation of the Supreme God, in which his glory had, for the first time, irradiated this lower world;—as a miraculous interposition of the most extraordinary character. They were, therefore, as strongly distinguished as any Christians

from all those speculatists who reject the belief that Christianity is a revelation from God.

BUT how was it possible that the Gnostics could reconcile their peculiar doctrines with the teachings of Christ? This is a question to which we will attend in the next Chapter.



CHAPTER XI.

OF THE MANNER IN WHICH THE Gnostics RECONCILED THEIR DOCTRINES WITH CHRISTIANITY.

IN comparing the peculiar doctrines of the Gnostics with the teaching of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels, or with the Christian Scriptures generally, the question naturally arises, How could they imagine those doctrines to have been taught by the Master whom they professed to follow, or identify them in any way with Christianity? We may, at first view, be inclined strongly to suspect that they held the common histories of Christ, and the other books of the New Testament, in no esteem; and to adopt the inference of Gibbon, that "it was impossible that the Gnostics could receive our present Gospels."*

BUT, on further attention to the subject, we may perceive that there is nothing peculiar in the case of the Gnostics. Their systems have long been obsolete; they are foreign from our

* See Vol. II. p. 12.

thoughts and imaginations; and in comparing them with the systems of other sects, we are apt to measure their relative distance from Christianity by their relative distance from the forms of Christian belief with which we are familiar. Of opinions equally false, those with which we have long been acquainted seem to us much less extraordinary than such as are newly presented to our minds. In inquiring, therefore, how the Gnostics could mistake their doctrines for the doctrines of Christianity, the first consideration to be attended to is the fact, that their mistake was not greater than that which has been committed by a large majority of the professed disciples of Christ. The faith of the whole Christian world for ten centuries before the Reformation had no advantage over that of the Gnostics, in being more accordant with reason and Christianity. The gross literal errors and absurdities, maintained by the Catholics of this period, are in as strong contrast with the truths of our religion, as the mystic extravagances of the early heretics. The system by which the Catholic faith was supplanted among Protestants, with its doctrines concerning the threefold personality of God, and concerning God's government of his creatures; with its representations of the totally depraved nature,

capable only of moral evil, with which he brings men into being ; with its scheme of redemption required by man's utter misery and helplessness ; its infinite satisfaction to the justice of God the Father, made by the sufferings of God the Son ; and its "horrible decrees,"* may, perhaps, appear to a rational believer of the present day to stand in as open and direct opposition to Christianity as the systems of the leading Gnostics. Or, to come down to a later period, the hypotheses and expositions by which the Gnostics reconciled their conceptions with the declarations of Christ and his Apostles could not, as many will think, be more irrational and extravagant than the hypotheses and expositions of that modern school of German theologians who, admitting the authenticity of the Gospels, find nothing supernatural in the history, but explain, as conformable to the common laws of nature, events which, according to their theory, have, from the time of their occurrence to the present

* I borrow the expression from a well-known passage of Calvin. "*Unde factum est, ut tot gentes una cum liberis eorum infantibus æternæ morti involveret lapsus Adæ absque remedio, nisi quia Deo ita visum est! Decretum quidem horribile fateor.*"—"Whence is it, that the fall of Adam involved so many nations with their infant children in eternal death, without remedy, except that it so seemed good to God! It is a horrible decree, I confess." *Institut. Lib. III. c. 23. § 7.*

day, been *mistaken* for miracles. I refer to the opinions of large bodies of Christians, or of men claiming to be called Christians; and to speculations which have been defended by such as were, or have been reputed to be, learned and able. It is not necessary to pursue the illustration by adverting to the doctrines of smaller sects. I will only observe further, as the case seems to me particularly analogous, that the disciples of Swedenborg are believers in our religion, that they have their full share of the Christian virtues, and that they have reckoned among their number men of more than common powers of mind; while he who rejects the systems both of Ptolemy and of Swedenborg will probably think that there is no reason for preferring one to the other, on account of its being the more rational faith, or having a better foundation in the Gospels.

WHATEVER opinions a thinking man may entertain of Christianity, or of religion unconnected with Christianity, when he compares them with those which have existed, or are existing, among mankind, he will find himself in a small minority. Whoever may really have attained to the

“bene munita, ...

“Edita doctrinâ sapientum, templa serena,”

*to the serene temples, well fortified, built up by
the learning of the wise,*

“Despicere unde quæas alios, passimque videre
Errare atque viam palentis querere vitæ,”

will assuredly not find them thronged; and, from their height, he will see not a few others wandering in errors as extravagant as those of the Gnostics.

SUCH have, for many centuries, been the doctrines of the larger portion of the professed followers of Christ, that Faith has been formally disconnected from Reason; and reason, or, as the term is usually qualified, *human* reason, has been represented as its dangerous enemy. From the time of the Gnostics to our own, there has always been a very numerous class, composed of individuals who have held different and opposite tenets, but who have all in common appealed, in some form or other, to an inward sense, a spiritual discernment, infallible in its perceptions, surpassing the powers of the understanding, and superseding their use. “The natural man,” says St. Paul, meaning the unconverted, him who rejected revelation, “receives not the truths of the spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot know them; because they are spiritually dis-

cerned";* that is to say, spiritual things, the truths taught by Christianity, are to be discerned only through the light which Christianity affords. But the words of the Apostle were early perverted by the theosophic Gnostics;† and there are none that have been more commonly or more mischievously abused. One main occasion of the existence, not only of the Gnostics, but of other sects of religionists, has been the vanity of belonging to a spiritual aristocracy, from which good sense, learning, and rational piety only form a ground of exclusion. Those Gnostics, with their pretence to spiritual discernment, had no more difficulty than later sects in finding what they looked for in the teachings of Christ.

THE ease with which different parties among Christians have discovered apparent support for doctrines the most irrational has been essentially connected with a fundamental error respecting the nature of those writings which compose the Old and New Testaments. Conformably to what I have before had occasion to remark,‡ all these writings, so different in character and value, have been represented as constituting the

* 1 Corinthians ii. 14.

† Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 8. § 3. p. 39.

‡ See Vol. II. p. cxvi.

Revelation from God. They have been ascribed to God as their proper author; the human writers being considered only as agents under his immediate direction. When, therefore, all these different writers, with all their imperfect and erroneous conceptions, were thus transformed into infallible divine instructors, there is no wonder that their words, even if correctly understood, should afford support for many errors. But, besides the direct consequence of this fundamental misapprehension, there has been an indirect consequence not less important. The words contained in the books of the Old and New Testaments being regarded as the words not of men, but of God, the rational principles of interpretation, which would apply to them as the words of men, have been set aside. These principles would lead us to study the respective characters of the authors of those books, and the various influences which were acting upon them, and to make ourselves acquainted with the particular occasion and purpose of their different writings, and with the characters, circumstances, opinions, errors, and modes of expression of those for whom their writings were immediately intended; and when we had thus enabled ourselves, as far as possible, to sympathize with them, we should determine their meaning with

a constant regard to the considerations which we had thus grouped together. But such knowledge is foreign from the purpose, if the books to be explained are not properly the works of human authors. It has, accordingly, been disregarded. The essential elements and rules of a correct interpretation have been neglected; and the work of explaining the Scriptures has been denied to reason and judgment, and delivered over to men's preconceptions, caprices, imaginations, and spiritual discernment. The consequence has been, that in the performance of this work we may find all varieties of error, from the wildest allegories and Cabalistic follies, down to the imposition of verbal meanings which are verbal or moral absurdities. The false modes of interpretation common in their day afforded the theosophic Gnostics, as false modes of interpretation have afforded later sects, a ready means of apparently reconciling their opinions with the Scriptures.

EVERY one acquainted with theological controversy must be familiar with the fact, that, in defending doctrines contrary to the teaching of Christ, a few texts are seized upon, the words of which, when standing alone, admit an interpretation favorable to those doctrines;

and that their defenders, fixing their attention on these texts, are able to close their eyes to the whole opposing tenor of the New Testament. But the Gnostics could have been in no want of such texts as might readily be accommodated to the support of their fundamental doctrine, that the God of the Jews was not the God of Christians. Marcion wrote a work on this subject which he entitled "Antitheses," the main object of which was to point out the contrariety between the representations given by Christ of his Father and those given of God in the Old Testament.* The opposition between Christianity and some of the views of religion and morals presented in the Pentateuch (which I have had occasion to remark) furnished the Gnostics with a storehouse of arguments from Scripture. As regards another principal point, the claim set up by the theosophic Gnostics to be by nature the chosen, or the elect, of God, as being *the spiritual*, they could have found no more difficulty in supporting their pretensions from the New Testament, than any of those who, since their day, have claimed to be elected as the spiritual through

* Tertullian. *Advers. Marcion*. Lib. I. c. 19. p. 374. Lib. IV. c. 1. p. 413. c. 6. p. 416.

a decree of God, irrespective of any merits of their own. Similar modes of misinterpretation would apply as well in the one case as the other, and furnish a similar harvest of apparent proofs.

AFTER these general remarks, we will proceed to consider more particularly the means by which the Gnostics reconciled their doctrines with their Christian faith. The inquiry is one of particular interest, on account of the proof which it affords that the Gnostics had no other Gospel-history than that which was common to them with the catholic Christians and with ourselves; and that, together with the catholic Christians, they used some one, or all, of our present Gospels, as the only document or documents of any value respecting the ministry of Christ.

IN the first place, then, the theosophic Gnostics, in common with the catholic Christians, applied the allegorical mode of interpretation to the New Testament. Neglecting the proper meaning of words, they educed from them mystical senses. Of these, I have already, in the course of this work, produced examples; and many more are given by their early opponents,

particularly by Irenæus. This afforded a ready means of accommodating the language of the New Testament to their conceptions. But their whole system of interpretation was, besides, arbitrary, and unsupported by any correct principles. The vocabulary of the theosophic Gnostics, like that of other erring sects, consisted, in great part, of words from the New Testament, on which they had imposed new senses. The names of the *Æons* most frequently mentioned were borrowed from the New Testament; and as the same name was applied by them to different individuals, — as the name of God, for example, was given both to the Gnostic Creator and to the Supreme Being, and that of Jesus both to the *Æon* so named and to the man Jesus, — it thus became easy for them, on the one hand, to find supposed references to their theory, and, on the other, to explain away much that was inconsistent with it.

Like other false expositors of Scripture, the Gnostics detached particular passages from their connection, and infused a foreign meaning into the words. Irenæus, after saying that they appealed to unwritten tradition as a source of their knowledge, goes on to remark, that, “twisting, according to the proverb, a rope of sand, they endeavour to accommodate in a plau-

sible manner to their doctrines the parables of the Lord, the declarations of the Prophets, or the words of the Apostles, so that their fiction may not seem to be without proof. But they neglect the order and connection of the Scriptures, and disjoin, as far as they are able, the members of the truth. They transpose and re-fashion, and, making one thing out of another, they deceive many by a fabricated show of the words of the Lord which they put together." * The Gnostics, according to him, in thus putting together proofs from Scripture, resembled one who, taking a mosaic representing a king, should separate the stones, and then form them into the likeness of a dog or a fox.† He afterwards compares them to those who made centos from lines of Homer, by which some story was told altogether foreign from any thing in his works.‡ They allowed, he says, that the unknown God, and the transactions within the Pleroma, "were not plainly declared by the Saviour, because all had not capacity to receive such knowledge; but, to those who were able to understand them,

* Cont. Hæres. Lib. I. c. 8. § 1. p. 36. — For σοφίᾳ in the last sentence, I adopt the reading φαντασίᾳ or φαντάσματος. See Massuet's note.

† Ibid.

‡ Lib. I. c. 9. § 4. pp. 45, 46.

they were signified by him mystically and in parables." *

IN addition to these modes of interpretation, the theosophic Gnostics likewise maintained a principle similar to a fundamental doctrine of the Roman Catholics, namely, that religious truth could not be learned from the Scriptures alone, without the aid of the oral instructions of Christ and his Apostles, as preserved by tradition. "When," says Irenæus, "they are confuted by proofs from the Scriptures, they turn and accuse the Scriptures themselves, as if they were not correct, nor of authority; they say that they contain contradictions, and that the truth cannot be discovered from them by those who are ignorant of tradition. For that it was not delivered in writing, but orally; whence Paul said, '*We speak wisdom among the perfect, but not the wisdom of this world.*'"† "The heretics," says Tertullian, "pretend that the Apostles did not reveal all things to all, but taught some doctrines openly to every one, some secretly and to a few only."‡ What

* Lib. I. c. 3. § 1. p. 14. Lib. II. c. 10. § 1. p. 196. Lib. II. c. 27. § 2. p. 155.

† Lib. III. c. 2. § 1. p. 174.

‡ De Præscriptione Hæreticorum, cap. 25. p. 210.

was peculiar in their own doctrines they regarded as that esoteric teaching which had come down to them by oral tradition.

Conformably to this, the Gnostics, in particular cases, pointed out certain individuals, supposed disciples of the Apostles, from whom their leaders had received their systems. Thus Valentinus was said to have been taught by Theodas, an acquaintance of Paul, and Basilides by Glaucias, a companion of Peter.* It would seem, likewise, from a single passage in Clement of Alexandria, that the Gnostics generally boasted that their opinions were favored by Matthias,† who was chosen an Apostle in the place of Judas.‡ Though the remark is not made by Clement, yet it is evident that this appeal to the authority of a particular Apostle — one of whom scarcely any thing is now known; and of whom it follows that scarcely any thing was known in the second century — proves that the Gnostics did not appeal with any confidence to the authority of the other Apostles.

Irenæus earnestly opposes the doctrine of a secret oral tradition.§ But it was maintained

* Clement. Al. Stromat. VII. § 17. p. 898.

† Ibid. p. 900.

‡ Acts i. 26.

§ Cont. Hæres. Lib. III. capp. 2-4. pp. 174-179.

by Clement as expressly and fully as by the Gnostics. It was altogether consistent with his conceptions, before explained,* that the more recondite truths of philosophy were to be exhibited under a veil, and not to be communicated to the generality. This higher knowledge, the philosophy of Christianity, to which he gave the same name (*γνῶσις*) which the Gnostics gave to their speculations, he supposed was to be attained only by those who were in his view *true* Gnostics (*γνωστικοί*), that is, truly enlightened. The greater number of Christians had only simple Faith, faith in the essential truths of Christianity, which was sufficient for them. On this Faith, as its foundation, all higher knowledge rested.† It was the notion of Clement, that the secret wisdom of which he speaks was first communicated by our Lord to Peter, James, John, and Paul, from whom it had been transmitted.‡ “Our Lord,” he says, “did not at once reveal to many those truths which did not belong to many, but he revealed them to a few to whom

* See before, p. 87, seqq.

† See, among many passages to this effect, Stromat. VII. pp. 890, 891.

‡ Stromat. I. p. 322. Etiam apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Lib. II. c. 1.

he knew them to be adapted, who were capable of receiving them, and of being conformed to them. But secret things, as God [meaning, I conceive, philosophical speculations concerning God], are committed not to writing, but to oral discourses.”*

This notion of a *secret* tradition is not found in Justin Martyr, Irenæus, or Tertullian. When the two latter speak of tradition, they mean that traditionary knowledge of the history and doctrines of Christianity which necessarily existed among Christians. It is described by Irenæus as a “tradition manifest throughout the world, and to be found in every church.”† By it, he says, a knowledge of our religion was preserved without books among believers in barbarous nations.‡ At the end of about a century from the preaching of the Apostles, there must have been, throughout the communities which they had formed, a general acquaintance with what they had taught, even had no written records of our religion been extant. In regard, likewise, to facts, important in their reference to Christianity, as, for example, the genuineness of the books of the New

* Stromat. I. p. 323.

† Lib. III. c. 3. § 1. p. 175.

‡ Ibid. c. 4. § 2. p. 178.

Testament, the Christians of the last half of the second century must have relied on the testimony of their predecessors. It is this traditional knowledge concerning Christianity, not secret, but open to all, which Irenæus and Tertullian appeal to, with justifiable confidence, in their reasonings against the heretics, when they distinguish between the evidence from tradition and the evidence from Scripture. The tradition of which they speak is altogether different from the *secret* tradition of Clement.

The origin of the opinion common to Clement and to the theosophic Gnostics may be explained by the supposition, that inferences, true or false, from the truths taught by Christ and his Apostles, and theories built on those truths, were conceived of, and represented, as having been taught by them; and, since it did not appear that they made a part of their public teaching, the notion in consequence grew up, that they were taught by them privately. This notion would ally itself with the conceptions of both Clement and the Gnostics concerning that higher esoteric wisdom which few only were capable of receiving. In holding their common belief, it is probable that neither had a distinct conception of what was

embraced in the tradition the existence of which they asserted. It appears from the whole tenor of the *Stromata* of Clement, that, in his view, the true knowledge, which, in union with accordant virtues, constituted an enlightened Christian (*his* Gnostic), in the highest sense of the words, comprehended the whole compass of intellectual philosophy, and particularly all that can be known by men respecting the nature, attributes, and operations of God.* If he had

* Instead of producing at length the authorities and reasons for this statement, which would carry us too far away from our main purpose, I will quote a few sentences from the valuable work of the present Bishop of Lincoln (Dr. Kaye), entitled "*Some Account of the Writings and Opinions of Clement of Alexandria.*" It is the most important work on the subject of which it treats. The author says (pp. 238 - 241) : —

"By *γνῶσις* [the higher esoteric knowledge] Clement understood the perfect knowledge of all that relates to God, his nature and dispensations. . . . The Gnostic [Clement's Gnostic] comprehends not only the First Cause and the Cause begotten by him [the Logos], and is fixed in his notions concerning them, possessing firm and immovable reasons ; but also, having learned from the truth itself, he possesses the most accurate truth, from the foundation of the world to the end, concerning good and evil, and the whole creation, and, in a word, concerning all which the Lord spake. . . . With respect to the source from which this knowledge is derived, Clement says that 'it was imparted by Christ to Peter, James, John, and Paul, and by them delivered down to their successors in the Church. It was not designed for the multitude, but communicated to those only who were capable of receiving it ; orally, not by writing.' "

The notions of Clement respecting this secret tradition are not

been asked, whether he believed that all this knowledge had been handed down by a secret tradition, the question might have presented the subject to his mind under a new aspect, but he undoubtedly would have answered in the negative. Had he then been requested to point out what particular part of it he conceived to have been thus handed down, I think he would have been embarrassed by the inquiry.

IN connection with their notion of a secret tradition, the Gnostics, or some of the Gnostics, said, according to Irenæus, "that the Apostles, practising dissimulation, accommodated their doctrine to the capacity of their

only to be distinguished from the reasonable conceptions of other fathers respecting that public traditionary knowledge concerning Christianity which necessarily existed among Christians, but equally also from an opinion which began to prevail in the latter half of the fourth century, and which has become fundamental in the Roman Catholic Church. This opinion is, that certain doctrines and rites, which are not to be kept secret, but are to be made known to all, and to be believed or practised by all, are not expressly taught or enjoined in the New Testament, but are derived from the oral teaching or the appointment of Christ or his Apostles, a knowledge of which has been preserved by tradition. This principle was, perhaps, first clearly avowed by Basil of Cæsarea, in the latter half of the fourth century, in his treatise Concerning the Holy Spirit.

hearers, and their answers to the previous conceptions of those who questioned them, talking blindly with the blind, weakly with the weak, and conformably to their error with those who were in error, and that thus they preached the Creator to those who thought that the Creator was the only God, but to those able to comprehend the unknown Father they communicated this unspeakable mystery in parables and enigmas." * "Some," says Irenæus, "impudently contend, that the Apostles, preaching among the Jews, could not announce any other God but him in whom the Jews had believed." †

AGAIN ; some of the Gnostics, especially the Marcionites, maintained that Paul was far superior to the other Apostles in the knowledge of the truth, — "the hidden doctrine having been manifested to him by revelation." ‡ They represented the other Apostles as having been entangled by Jewish prejudices, from which he was in a great measure free. Hence Tertullian, in one place, calls him "the Apostle of

* Lib. III. cap. 5. § 1. p. 179.

† Ibid. cap. 12. § 6. p. 195.

‡ Ibid. c. 13. § 1. p. 200.

the Heretics.”* In support of this opinion, Marcion relied much on that passage in the Epistle to the Galatians† in which Paul represents himself as having reproved Peter and Barnabas for not acting conformably to the principles of Christianity, but by their conduct “compelling the Gentiles to Judaize,” that is, to observe the Levitical Law.‡ Marcion regarded the Gospels as expressing the false Jewish opinions of their writers. But among the Gospels he conceived that there was ground for making a choice; and he selected, for his own use and that of his followers, the Gospel of Luke, the companion of Paul. This he further adapted to his purpose by rejecting from it what he viewed as conformed to those opinions. Nor did he consider Paul himself as wholly free from Jewish errors, but likewise struck out, from those of his Epistles which he used, the passages in which he thought them to be expressed.

Sometimes, according to Irenæus, the Gnostics, apparently without making an exception in favor of St. Paul, charged the Apostles gen-

* *Advers. Marcion. Lib. III. c. 5. p. 399.*

† *Ch. ii. 11, seqq.*

‡ *Advers. Marcion. Lib. IV. c. 3. pp. 414, 415. Lib. I. c. 20. p. 375. Conf. De Præscript. Hæretic. c. 23. p. 210.*



erally with Jewish errors and ignorance concerning the higher truths and mysteries of religion. "All those," he says, "who hold pernicious doctrines, have departed in their faith from Him who is God, and think that they have found out more than the Apostles, having discovered another God. They think that the Apostles preached the Gospel while yet under the influence of Jewish prejudices, but that their own faith is purer, and that they are wiser than the Apostles." He states that Marcion proceeded on these principles in rejecting the use of some of the books of Scripture, and of portions of those which he retained.* "The heretics," says Tertullian, "are accustomed to affirm that the Apostles did not know all things; while at other times, under the influence of the same madness, they turn about, and maintain that the Apostles did, indeed, know all things, but did not teach all things to all."† "I cannot help wondering," says Clement of Alexandria, "how some dare to call themselves perfect, and Gnostics, thinking themselves superior to the Apostles."‡ But the theosophic Gnostics did not stop here.

* Lib. III. c. 12. § 12. p. 198.

† De Præscript. Hæretic. c. 22. p. 209.

‡ Pædagogus, Lib. I c. 6. pp. 128, 129.

Irenæus, after saying that the heretics, when confuted from the Scriptures, appealed to oral tradition, goes on thus : — “ But when we, on the other hand, appeal to that tradition which, proceeding from the Apostles, has been preserved in the Church by a succession of Elders, then they oppose tradition, saying that they, being not only wiser than the Elders, but wiser than the Apostles, have discovered the pure truth. For the Apostles, they say, mixed their legal notions with the words of the Saviour ; and not only the Apostles, but the Lord himself spoke sometimes from the Creator [as the Messiah of the Creator], sometimes from the Middle Space [that is, conformably to the spiritual nature which he had derived from Achamoth], and sometimes from the highest height [as the *Æon Christ* from the Pleroma] ; * but

* See before, pp. 166, 171. — According to the verbal construction of the old Latin Translation of Irenæus, which is here our authority, and which I have followed in my translation, though not in my exposition, these clauses apply equally to the Apostles as to Christ. But I cannot think that this meaning was intended by Irenæus, or, at least, that this was the meaning of the Gnostics. Irenæus elsewhere (Lib. I. c. 7. § 3. p. 34) gives a similar account of their opinions respecting the preaching of Christ, without mentioning the Apostles. Nor is there any probability that the Gnostics believed in the *inspiration* of men from the Pleroma, which opinion would be implied in the sup-



that they themselves know with full assurance the hidden mystery, unmixed, in all its purity.”* The opinion of the Gnostics, here expressed, concerning the discourses of Christ is analogous to the Orthodox doctrine, still extant, that he spoke sometimes as a man, sometimes as God, and sometimes in his mediatorial character, as neither God nor man simply, but as both united; and that as a man he was ignorant of what, being God, he knew.

There is nothing to object to the general proposition of the Gnostics, that the Apostles were under the influence of Jewish prejudices, nor to the proof which they brought of this fact from the conduct of Peter and Barnabas, which was reprov'd by Paul. Their extravagance consisted in the irrational misapplication which they made of this principle. The spirit of God, which enlightened the minds of the Apostles as to all essential truths of religion, did not deliver them from all error, and transform them into all-wise and all-knowing philosophers. But, if the Apostles were liable to any errors, they were particularly exposed to the influence of

position that the Apostles sometimes spoke “from the highest height.”

* Lib. III. c. 2. § 2. p. 175.

those in which they had been educated, and could hardly escape being more or less affected by the inveterate conceptions and errors of their countrymen. It being the object of the Gnostics to separate Judaism from Christianity, and to distinguish the God of the Jews from the God of Christians, they naturally seized upon this truth to effect their purpose ; and as no strongly marked line can be drawn, defining the sphere within which alone the Apostles were liable to error, they applied, or rather misapplied, a principle correct in itself, to all cases in which the words of the Apostles so explicitly contradicted their doctrine as to be incapable by any force of being conformed to it.

It remains to add a few words concerning the belief of the theosophic Gnostics in their own infallible spiritual knowledge. This they conceived of as the result of their spiritual nature. "They object to us," says Clement of Alexandria, "that we are of another nature, and unable to comprehend their peculiar doctrines."* A similar pretension to that of the Gnostics has been common among Christians.

* *Stromat.* VII. § 16. pp. 891, 892.

An essential doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church is its own infallibility, an infallibility which must reside in some of its individual members. Among the sects into which Protestants have been divided, the generality have, at least in the earlier stages of their growth, maintained the principle, expressed in the perverted language of St. Paul, that *spiritual things are spiritually discerned*, and have, of course, confined this unerring spiritual discernment to themselves. Calvin taught that "the first step in the school of the Lord is to renounce human reason.* For, as if a veil were interposed, it hinders us from attaining to the mysteries of God, which are not revealed but to little children";† and after these words, he proceeds to quote, as might be expected, the often-quoted passage of St. Paul just referred to. Even the genuineness and inspiration of the books of the Bible, or, as he expresses it, the fact that they "had proceeded from the very mouth of God" (*ab ipsissimo Dei ore fluxisse*), "were not to be submitted to reasoning and arguments," but were spiritually discerned; so as to be known with the same certainty as men

* "Humana perspicacia."

† Institut. Lib. III. c. 2. § 34.

know that black is not white, and sweet is not bitter.* The theosophic Gnostics, in expressing their sense of the incapacity of common Christians to understand their doctrines, could not have used stronger language than that of Calvin concerning the natural blindness of the unregenerate to the truths of religion. It was, in his view, the spiritual illumination of the elect, which enabled them clearly to discern these truths; or, in other words, clearly to discern the identity of the system which he taught with the teachings of Christ.

THE Gnostics, as we have seen, were equally able with Calvin to identify their systems with Christianity. In the modes by which they effected their purpose, we may observe the same operations of the human mind as have been going on from their day to our own. One of the most effectual means of checking their further progress is by directing attention to the extravagances to which they lead. It is a main advantage resulting from the study of obsolete errors, and one which this study alone can furnish, that, as we have no preju-

* Ibid. Lib. I. c. 7.



dices in their favor, we are able, without disturbance, to trace them to their sources ; and when those sources are discovered, we may perceive that they are still in full action, producing new errors, or more commonly, perhaps, reproducing old ones under a new form. It may be doubted whether a History of Human Folly would not be a more instructive work than our Histories of Philosophy ; but its contents would not be throughout so different from theirs as its different title might lead one to expect.

Among the Gospels, the Marcionites used only their copy of that of Luke. To this they joined ten Epistles of St. Paul, from which, as from the Gospel, they rejected certain passages, as I have before mentioned. On this history of Christ, and on these Epistles, they founded their system, and from them they reasoned. They appealed to them as freely and confidently as did the catholic Christians, and the theosophic Gnostics, to the books of the New Testament in general. The arguments which they drew from them are presented to view in the writings of their opponents, especially of Tertullian. From those books they derived their knowledge of Christ

and of Christianity. It does not appear that they made a pretence to any exclusive spiritual discernment, or that they relied on any secret tradition. It does appear that they made no use of any other history of Christ besides the Gospel of Luke. No apocryphal gospel is said to have been extant among them. They are never charged with having rested their system, wholly or in part, on any such gospel. But, had there been ground for the charge, it would undoubtedly have been made. The controversy between them and the catholic Christians would have brought out such a fact with the broadest distinctness. It would have been, to say the least, as much insisted upon as the fact that they struck out some passages from the Gospel of Luke and the Epistles of Paul, notices of which are continually recurring in the writings of their opponents. Those passages the Marcionites rejected, and they disavowed the authority of the other three Gospels, — not on the ground that they were not genuine, but because, believing them to be genuine, they believed their authors to be under the influence of Jewish prejudices.

BUT were those which have been mentioned



the only means that the Gnostics made use of to find support for their systems in the real or supposed teaching of Christ? Had they not, as has been imagined, gospels of their own, presenting a view of his ministry and instructions, different from that contained in the catholic Gospels; — accounts of Christ, which they preferred and opposed to those given by the Evangelists? Every one has heard of apocryphal and Gnostic gospels.

As regards the Marcionites, these questions have been answered. It is evident that they had no such gospels or gospel. Those theosophic Gnostics, who adopted the means that have been explained of reconciling their doctrines with Christianity, could, likewise, have had no such gospels. It has appeared, not only in the present Chapter, but throughout this work, that their systems, equally with the faith of the catholic Christians, were founded on the common account of Christ's ministry. In their reasonings, they constantly referred to the Gospels. They therefore could have received as of authority no history of his ministry which varied essentially from those Gospels. Whether they had any other histories of his ministry, which did not vary essentially from the Gospels, is an unimportant question,

so far as it regards the main purpose which we have in view. For, if those histories proceeded from authors who wrote from independent sources of information, they would serve, by their agreement, to confirm the accounts of the catholic Gospels; while, if they were merely founded on those Gospels, or on some one of them, they would serve to show the authority which the latter had very early attained.

BUT a question may be virtually settled without all the explanation having been given which is necessary to our satisfaction, and to a full understanding of the subject. After all that has appeared, the inquiry may still recur, What, then, were those apocryphal and Gnostic gospels about which so much has been said? To this inquiry I propose to give an answer in the next Chapter.

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CHAPTER XII.

ON THE QUESTION, WHETHER THE Gnostics opposed to
the four gospels any other written histories or
history of Christ's ministry.

THIS question will lead us to consider all those books that have been called *apocryphal gospels* which we have any reason for supposing to have been extant during the first two centuries, except the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of Marcion. We have already seen the grounds for believing that the former, as it was first used by the Hebrew Christians, was the Hebrew original of the Gospel of Matthew, though its text, in some or many copies, may have afterwards become much corrupted.* The latter was merely the Gospel of Luke mutilated by Marcion.† The authority of neither of these books, therefore, could be opposed to that of the catholic Gospels; nor can the epithet *apocryphal*, with its common associations, be properly applied to them. No book which was not in existence

* See Vol. I. p. xlv., seqq.

† See Additional Note, C.

till after the end of the second century could have been used by the Gnostics as a basis for their opinions, or could, by any sect whatever, have been brought into competition with the four Gospels, as an original history of Christ's ministry. All that is necessary to be said in direct reply to the question proposed lies within a small compass. But the subject of apocryphal gospels, as well as that of apocryphal books in general, has been treated in such a manner as necessarily to produce confused and erroneous conceptions respecting them. It is a subject which demands explanation, where argument is not needed; and the inquiry on which we are about to enter will, through its incidental relations, extend much beyond the second century, and embrace books which were not extant till long after that period.*

* In respect to the apocryphal gospels, the modern writer whose information is principally relied on is Fabricius. In his "*Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti*," he has given a full and accurate account of all the passages relating to them which are to be found in ancient writers. I say, "a full and accurate account"; because his work has now sustained that reputation unquestioned for more than a century. — Fabricius, however, has merely brought together a mass of materials, without applying them to the illustration of any fact whatever. He has not arranged the books which he treats of chronologically, with reference to the period when they are first mentioned, or when they may be supposed to have appeared. Such an arrangement would

I BEGIN by stating the most important considerations respecting the question proposed ; and I hope to be excused for some repetition in hereafter recalling attention to them with reference to different writings.

at once show that far the greater number deserve no consideration from any supposable bearing on the authority of the Gospels. He has arranged them in the alphabetical order of their titles, which tends to produce the impression, that they all equally deserve attention.

Fabricius was followed by Jones in the first two volumes of his "New and Full Method of settling the Canonical Authority of the New Testament." But the principal value of Jones's work consists in its giving in an English dress the information to be found in Fabricius, and in the republication of some of the later apocryphal writings (also published by Fabricius) with English translations. He had no clear comprehension of his own purpose in writing ; and his views and reasonings only tend to perplex the subject. He follows Fabricius in arranging the books in the alphabetical order of their titles.

In 1839, J. C. Thilo published the first volume of his "Codex Apocryphus Novi Testamenti," a work commenced on an extensive plan, but of which no other portion has appeared. The first volume contains the later apocryphal writings, which had previously been published, with others in addition, — all apparently edited in a careful and thorough manner, with Prolegomena and notes. It contains also the Gospel of Luke used by Marcion, as restored by Hahn, who has made Marcion's Gospel a particular subject of study.

I shall refer to the three works which I have mentioned by the names of their respective authors. The copy of Fabricius which I use is of the second edition, printed in 1719, in three parts. That of Jones is of the Oxford edition, printed in 1798.

Of the controversy carried on by the catholic Christians with the Valentinians and the Marcionites, we have, as has been seen, abundant remains. The opinions and arguments of those heretics are brought forward in order to be confuted; and though we may not regard them as fully and fairly stated, yet, on the other hand, it cannot be supposed that any striking peculiarity in their opinions, or any main topic of their reasoning, has been passed over in silence. If they had opposed other histories of Christ to the four Gospels, if they had relied for the support of their systems on accounts of his ministry different from those we now possess, we should find abundant notices of the fact. If they and the catholic Christians had been at issue on the question, Which among discordant histories of Christ was to be received as authentic, this would necessarily have been the main point in controversy, the question to be settled before all others. We find in the case of the Marcionites, that their confining themselves to the use of a mutilated copy of Luke's Gospel is a circumstance continually presented to view; and we have particular notices of the use which other heretics made of a few passages relating to Christ, not found in the Evangelists. The fa-

thers were eager to urge against the Gnostics the charges of corrupting and contemning the Scriptures, and of fabricating apocryphal writings. Had there been occasion to make it, they would not have passed over what in their view would have been a far graver allegation, that the Gnostics pretended to set up other histories of Christ in opposition to those received by the great body of Christians. Such a fact, from its very nature, neither would nor could have remained unnoticed. Abundant evidence of it must have come down to us; and if no evidence is to be found, we may conclude without hesitation, that the Gnostics made no pretence to having more authentic histories of Christ than the Gospels.

What, then, is the state of the case? I answer, in the first place, that Irenæus and Tertullian were the two principal writers against the Gnostics, and from their works it does not appear that the Valentinians, the Marcionites, or any other Gnostic sect, adduced in support of their opinions a single narrative relating to the public ministry of Christ besides what is found in the Gospels. It does not appear that they ascribed to him a single sentence of any imaginable importance which the Evangelists have not transmitted. It does not appear

that any sect appealed to the authority of any history of his public ministry besides the Gospels, except so far as the Marcionites, in their use of an imperfect copy of St. Luke's Gospel, may be regarded as forming a verbal exception to this remark. The question, then, which we have proposed for consideration, would seem to be settled. The Gnostics did not oppose any other history of Christ to the catholic Gospels. Had they done so, it is altogether incredible that the fact should not have been conspicuous throughout the controversial writings of Irenæus and Tertullian.

But what, then, were those ancient books which have been called "apocryphal gospels"? I answer, that, with the exception of the Gospel of the Hebrews, the Gospel of Marcion, and a narrative which Tatian formed out of the four Evangelists, it is not probable that any one of them was a professed history of Christ's ministry. The main evidence of this fact will appear from a particular examination of the accounts which have been given of them. But it may be here observed, that the name "gospel," signifying in its primary meaning "a joyful message," "glad news," was given as a title to the works of the Evangelists, because they contained an account of the joyful

message which Christ gave from Heaven to men. It but indirectly denoted their character as histories of his ministry. The name "gospel" has ever been used to signify the whole scheme of Christianity; and a book, containing the views of its writer concerning this system, or the views ascribed by him to a particular Apostle, might hence be entitled his gospel, or denominated by him the gospel of that Apostle. There was a book in common use among the Manichæans, called a gospel, which, as Cyril of Jerusalem expressly mentions, contained no account of the actions of Christ.* In later times, in the latter part of the seventeenth century, a book was published by Dr. Arthur Bury, which he entitled "The Naked Gospel." Another work appeared about the same time in Germany, which was called "The Eternal Gospel"; and another with the same title was produced in the thirteenth century.† It is not improbable, likewise, that the fathers may have used the term "gospel" in the same way in which it has been used by controvertists in modern times, when

* It is ascribed by him to Scythianus as its author. *Catechesis*, VI. § 13. p. 92.

† Fabricius, I. 337*, 338.

they have charged their opponents with teaching "another gospel." There is a French book entitled "The New Gospel of Cardinal Palavicini, revealed by him in his History of the Council of Trent"; * Scioppius, in one of his letters, talks of "the fifth gospel of Luther"; † and the Jesuit René Rapin published against the Jansenists a work which he called "The Gospel of the Jansenists." ‡ Thus in ancient times the charge of teaching a new gospel might occasion the title "gospel" to be given to some book by which it was not assumed; or even lead to the false supposition, that there was some book which bore that title, or to which it might be applied, when no such book existed. Among what have been called the Gnostic gospels, we find, as I have formerly mentioned, one under the name of "The Gospel of Eve," probably used by the Ophians, which professed to contain that wisdom which Eve learned from the Serpent. This gospel, therefore, was not a history of the ministry of Christ. § Nor can we reasonably suppose that this character was ascribed to an-

* Fabricius, I. 339, note.

† La Roche's *Memoirs of Literature*, Vol. II. p. 252.

‡ Fabricius, I. 339, note.

§ See Vol. II. p. 215, seqq.

other, said to be in use among the Cainites, called "The Gospel of Judas," meaning Judas Iscariot.* Epiphanius mentions a book as in use among Gnostics, which he says was named "The Gospel of Perfection."† Its title, and the brief account which he gives of it, imply that it was not an historical book, if indeed any such book existed. These remarks are merely preliminary. As we proceed, I trust it will appear that there is no ground for believing that any work which may properly be called a Gnostic gospel was a professed history of Christ's ministry, or that any history of his ministry was in circulation during the second century, among either the catholic Christians or the Gnostics, besides the catholic Gospels, and books, like those of Marcion and Tatian, founded upon one or all of them.

WITH this understanding of what might be meant by the title "gospel," let us next inquire what we may find respecting Gnostic or apocryphal gospels in Irenæus and Tertullian.

TERTULLIAN often mentions the mutilated

* Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 31. § 1. p. 112.

† Heres. XXVI. § 2. p. 83.

copy of Luke's Gospel used by the Marcionites. But this, as I have said, should not be spoken of as an apocryphal gospel. He nowhere, throughout his writings, ascribes to the Gnostics the use of any proper Gnostic gospel, in any sense of the term "gospel." He nowhere speaks of any apocryphal gospel whatever, or intimates a knowledge of the existence of such a book. The conclusion is unavoidable. Either he did not know of the existence of any such book, or, if he did, he regarded it as too obscure and unimportant to deserve notice. But neither could have been the case in respect to any book which the Gnostics brought into competition with the Gospels.

ONCE, and once only, Irenæus speaks of what he calls a "gospel," as used by the Valentinians, in addition to the four Gospels. He thus expresses himself concerning it:—"The followers of Valentinus, throwing aside all fear, and bringing forward their own compositions, boast that they have more gospels than there are. For they have proceeded to such boldness as to entitle a book not long since written by them 'The True Gospel,' [*verbally* "The Gospel of the Truth,"] a book

which agrees in no respect with the Gospels of the Apostles, so that not even the Gospel can exist among them without blasphemy. For, if that which is brought forward by them be the true Gospel, but differ at the same time from those Gospels which have been handed down to us by the Apostles (those who wish may learn in what manner from the writings themselves), then it is evident that the Gospel handed down by the Apostles is not the true Gospel." *

The Author of the Addition to Tertullian, probably copying Irenæus, says, — "Valentinus likewise has his gospel besides ours."† By Valentinus is here, I presume, meant the Valentinians; sects being not unfrequently by the fathers thus designated from their leaders. These are the only notices to be found of the Valentinians, as a sect, having used

* "Si enim quod ab iis profertur veritatis est Evangelium, dissimile est autem hoc illis [sc. Evangelii] quæ ab Apostolis nobis tradita sunt; (qui volunt possunt discere quemadmodum ex ipsis scripturis;) ostenditur jam non esse id quod ab Apostolis traditum est veritatis Evangelium." Lib. III. c. 11. § 9. p. 192. This difficult passage may perhaps be thus arranged with a change of pointing, a parenthesis, and the printing of *scripturis* without an initial capital. But no difference of arrangement or translation is important as regards the present subject.

† De Præscript. Hæretic. c. 40. p. 232.

any other book called a gospel besides the canonical Gospels.

It is evident from the passage of Irenæus, as well as from much other equally unequivocal testimony, that the Valentinians received the four Gospels in common use. The charge against them is, that they had more gospels than the catholic Christians, that is, one more. This additional gospel, therefore, could have contained no history of Christ's ministry at variance with that in the four Gospels, which they also admitted. But (if such a gospel existed) there is no probability that it was an historical book of any sort. It was a gospel, we may reasonably presume, of the kind before described, containing an account of what its author believed to be the doctrines of the Gospel. If it had been a history presenting any additions to the narratives of the Evangelists, adopted by the Valentinians to support their opinions, they would have quoted it for this purpose ; and of the additional accounts, and of the arguments founded upon them, we should have had abundant notices in the writings of their opponents, and in the fragments still extant of their own. But there are no such notices whatever.

Such is the state of the case, if the Valen-

tinians really had among them a book with the title supposed. But, though the account of Irenæus, so far as it relates to the existence of the book, may be correct, there is reason for doubting it altogether. If he has fallen into a mistake, it is one that may easily be explained. The Valentinians, we may suppose, professed that they alone had "the true Gospel," meaning that they alone held the true doctrines of the Gospel; and some of their opponents misunderstood them as meaning that they possessed a book with that title. Had they really, as Irenæus says, boasted of possessing such a gospel, it must have been an important book in reference to the exposition of their doctrines. But, as I have said, it is nowhere referred to by Irenæus himself, except in the passage just quoted. It is mentioned by no subsequent writer except the Author of the Addition to Tertullian, who probably took his notice of it from Irenæus. Tertullian himself, who was well acquainted with the works of Irenæus, affords proof, by his silence concerning it in his writings against the Valentinians, that he was not aware of its existence, or regarded it as not worth notice. It follows, therefore, either that Irenæus was in error in supposing that there was such

a book, or that he was in error in supposing that the Valentinians, generally, attached any importance to it.

IRENÆUS gives one other title (before mentioned), purporting to be that of an apocryphal gospel which he supposed to be in existence, and to be called "The Gospel of Judas," that is, of Judas Iscariot. He represents it as having been used by the Cainites. According to him, these heretics were distinguished by their abominable immorality, by their degrading the character of the Creator, and by their celebrating such personages in the Old Testament as Cain, Esau, Korah, and the Sodomites. They regarded them as allied to themselves by the possession of the same spiritual nature, and as having been, on account of this nature, persecuted by the Creator. They apparently considered Cain as the head of the spiritual among men. He was from "the higher power" (*a superiore principalitate*). The truth, on these subjects, they said, was known to Judas alone; and in consequence of this knowledge, "he performed the mystery of delivering up his master; and thus through Judas all things earthly and heavenly [all the works of the Creator] were dissolved. And they produce,"

adds Irenæus, "a fabrication to this effect, calling it 'The Gospel of Judas.'"^{*} The account of Irenæus is repeated by Epiphanius and Theodoret.

If there were such a book as Irenæus names, there is no ground for believing it to have been a fabricated history of Christ's ministry. But it is highly improbable that any sect or any book existed, such as Irenæus describes. It is a moral absurdity to suppose that there was a Christian sect which held such doctrines, and were guilty of such vices, as he imputes to the Cainites;—that there were Christians avowing Cain to be their spiritual head, claiming alliance with the Sodomites, and taking Judas for their religious teacher. Nor would there be much less absurdity in imagining that any pseudo-Christian Gnostics exposed themselves in this barefaced manner to infamy and detestation; that they claimed to be on a level with the worst characters in the Old and New Testaments, and avowed doctrines at once so monstrous, and so intimately connected with Judaism and Christianity. Without supposing the existence of any such sect, it is not difficult to explain the origin

^{*} Cont. Hæres. Lib. I. c. 31. pp. 112, 113.

of the stories concerning it, in connection with the origin of the name. We have good reason to think that the name "Nicolaitans" was derived from passages in the New Testament; and especially from two in the Apocalypse, in which it is applied to those who, having professed themselves Christians, indulged in licentiousness.* That of "Cainites," we may suppose, was derived from a passage (formerly quoted) in the Epistle of Jude, in which certain individuals are thus spoken of:—"Woe for them! for they have walked in the way of Cain, and given themselves up to deceive, like Balaam, for pay, and brought destruction on themselves through rebellion, like Korah."† The name was applied to those otherwise called Nicolaitans, as we are informed by Tertullian in the only passage in which he mentions it.‡ But there was probably still another occasion of its use. The theosophic Gnostics considered Seth as the representative and head of the spiritual among men, and, in consequence, appear to have sometimes given themselves the

* See Vol. II. pp. 168, 169.

† Jude, ver. 11. — See Vol. II. pp. 167, 168.

‡ Tertullian, after referring to the Nicolaitans mentioned in the Apocalypse, says:—"Sunt et nunc alii Nicolaitæ; Caiana hæresis dicitur." *De Præscript. Hæretic.* c. 33. p. 214.

name of Sethians.* But the assumption of this name might naturally provoke the more angry among their opponents to apply the opposite name of Cainites to those Gnostics, at least, whom they regarded as guilty of gross vices. The name being given, a system of doctrines corresponding to it would be easily fabricated, out of exaggerations, misconceptions, and false reports; and one may find little difficulty in supposing that the assertion, that those to whom it was applied were traitors to Christ, teaching not his gospel, but the gospel of Judas Iscariot, gave occasion to the notion that they had a book with that title. If there were no sect holding the doctrines imputed to the Cainites, there was no gospel in existence conformed to those doctrines. Should it, however, still be thought that there may have been such a book, it is to be recollected that it must have been a book not used by Christians, of no authority, and, as appears from the little attention it received, of no notoriety.

SUCH is all the information concerning Gnostic or apocryphal gospels afforded by the two

* See Vol. II. p. 32, note; pp. 230, 231.

principal writers against the Gnostics. Tertullian, throughout his works, mentions no such gospel. Irenæus gives two titles supposed by him to belong to such books. But it is very improbable that there was any such book as "The Gospel of Judas." The existence of "The True Gospel," also, is doubtful. But if there were a book bearing that title, we cannot reasonably suppose it to have been a history of Christ's ministry at variance with the four Gospels.

THE Valentinians and Marcionites were the two principal sects of the Gnostics, and probably comprehended far the greater part of their number. Excepting the story of Irenæus concerning "The True Gospel," there is no charge against either sect, that they appealed to apocryphal gospels; unless that name be given to Marcion's defective copy of Luke's Gospel. Next to those two sects the Basilidians appear, for some reason or other, to have been regarded as the most important; and we will now attend to what is said of their use of an apocryphal gospel.

Of any work called a "gospel," different from the four Gospels, which was in use among

the Basilidians, there is no mention in Irenæus or in Clement of Alexandria, who are the principal sources of all the information concerning them to which any credit can be attached. Nor is such a work mentioned by Epiphanius, who in general brought together all that he could find, true or false, to the prejudice of the heretics; nor by Eusebius, among the apocryphal writings which he enumerates; nor by Theodoret, who compiled his accounts of the heretics from many earlier authors. Such a book is first named by the Author of the Homilies on Luke, which have been ascribed to Origen. That writer speaks of it in a passage in which he gives the titles, real or supposed, of various apocryphal gospels, to be hereafter noticed. He is commenting on the words with which Luke begins his Gospel, — “ Since many have undertaken to arrange a narrative of the events accomplished among us.” He regards the term “ undertaken ” as perhaps implying a censure on the works referred to by Luke. The four Evangelists, he says, did not “ undertake ”; they wrote under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. But others (since their day) had “ undertaken,” and among them “ Basilides,” he says, “ had the boldness to write

a 'Gospel according to Basilides.' " * The whole passage, with this notice of a gospel ascribed to Basilides, was imitated by Ambrose † and Jerome ‡ toward the end of the fourth century.

Such is the evidence that a gospel was written by Basilides. It consists in the assertion of an unknown writer, who must have lived more than a century after the death of Basilides, and the repetition of this assertion by two other writers more than two centuries after that event. This evidence is of no weight to counterbalance the great improbability that such a gospel should not have been taken notice of by the earlier opponents of Basilides, nor by any writer of a later age who has professed to give an account of his doctrines and sect. The fathers were very ready to charge the heretics with using books of no authority, apocryphal books. Why should we not have heard as much of a gospel written by Basilides, as of the defective Gospel of Luke used by the Marcionites ?

The notion that Basilides wrote a gospel

* Homil. I. in Lucam. Origen: Opp. III. 933.

† Expositio Evang. Lucæ, Lib. I. Opp. I. 1265. Ed. Benedict.

‡ Comment. in Matth. Proem. Opp. Tom. IV. P. I. p. 2.

probably arose from the fact, that he wrote a commentary on the Gospels. In this he of course explained his views of Christianity; and these views, or the book in which they were contained, might be called his gospel. Agrippa Castor, who, according to Eusebius, was a contemporary of Basilides, and whose "most able confutation" Eusebius says was extant in his time, apparently knew nothing of any "Gospel of Basilides," but did mention that he "wrote twenty-four books on the Gospel," meaning by that term the four Gospels.* From

* Φησὶν [Ἀγρίππας] αὐτὸν εἰς μὲν τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον τέσσαρα πρὸς τοῖς εἴκοσι συντάξαι βιβλία. Eusebii Hist. Eccles. Lib. IV. c. 7. — "It is uncertain," says Fabricius (I. 343*, note), "whether Basilides wrote these twenty-four volumes of Commentaries on the Gospel of Matthew, or on some other of the four canonical Gospels, or on the whole Gospel-history, or on the Gospel according to the Egyptians, or, as Valesius suspects, on his own gospel." Similar doubts have been expressed by other learned men. They appear to have arisen, in part, from the erroneous prepossession, that the Gnostics commonly used apocryphal gospels in preference to the catholic Gospels, and from inattention to a very common use of the word "gospel" (εὐαγγέλιον) in ancient times, in a sense with which we are no longer familiar. The four Gospels, considered collectively, were called "the Gospel." Thus Origen says (Comment. in Joan. Opp. IV. 98),—"The Gospel, though written by several, is one in effect." The title "Gospel," in the singular, was the appropriate title of a book containing the four Gospels. There is, in fact, no ground for doubt respecting the meaning of the words quoted. By τὸ Εὐαγγέλιον, the article having no reference to any book before mentioned, and

the twenty-third book of this Commentary Clement of Alexandria quotes several passages in connection.* The Commentary of Basilides is one among the decisive proofs of the respect in which the Gospels were held by the theosophic Gnostics.

If the account of the Author of the Homilies on Luke were founded on the existence of any work, this Commentary, in all probability, was the work, which, having heard of it and not having seen it, he called "The Gospel of Basilides." But were there another book bearing that title, it could not have been a history of Christ's ministry at variance with our present Gospels. Of such a book we should have had far other information than an incidental mention of its title first made more than a century after the death of its author.

In what precedes we have seen the whole amount of information concerning apocryphal gospels the use of which is attributed to either of the three principal Gnostic sects. This in-

the term being used without any explanatory epithet, nothing can here be meant but the four Gospels, or, what amounts to the same thing, the Gospel-history as contained in the four Gospels.

* Stromat. IV. § 12. pp. 599, 600.

formation consists of two stories, one concerning "The True Gospel," and the other concerning "The Gospel of Basilides." It is doubtful, as we have seen, whether any books existed bearing those titles; but did such books exist, they must have been works of no celebrity, not current among the Gnostics, and not regarded by them as of authority. No writer produces an example of their drawing an argument from either of them, or of their appealing to them for any purpose whatever.

We have seen, likewise, that, of the two principal writers against the Gnostics, Tertullian makes no mention of apocryphal gospels, and we have considered what is the amount of evidence which Irenæus affords of their existence and use.

NEXT to Irenæus and Tertullian, their contemporary, Clement of Alexandria, is our most important authority concerning the Gnostics. He was a man of extensive information, a wide reader, quoting from a great variety of authors, and acquainted with the writings of the principal theosophic Gnostics, whose words he often cites. From him, therefore, if from any one, we should expect authentic notices of apocryphal gospels; and, accordingly, we do find

mention of one such book, which, there is no doubt, really existed. It was called "The Gospel according to the Egyptians."

This book has, in modern times, been particularly remarked. It has been thought by many to have been a history of Christ's ministry, used by the Gnostics; and some have even imagined that it was one of those gospels referred to by Luke in the introduction to his own.* The facts concerning it are these.

Clement, in reasoning against those heretics who denied the lawfulness of marriage, gives the following passage, as adduced by them in support of their doctrine. "When Salome asked the Lord, 'How long death should have power,' he replied, 'As long as you women bear children.'"[†] This, Clement asserts, is only a declaration that death is the natural consequence of birth. Considering the passage, therefore, as having no force to prove the point for which it was adduced, namely, our Lord's disapproval of marriage, he does not remark upon the question of its authenticity, nor mention in this place from what book it was taken.

* The opinions of modern authors respecting it are collected by Jones, I. 201, seqq.

† Stromat. III. § 6. p. 532.

But a few pages after he says:—"But those who, through their specious continence, oppose themselves to the creation of God, cite what was uttered to Salome, of which I have before taken notice. The words are found, as I suppose, in the Gospel according to the Egyptians. For they affirm that our Saviour himself said, 'I have come to destroy the works of the female';—by 'the female' meaning lust, by 'the works' generation and corruption."*

Clement explains the words ascribed to Jesus in a different sense from that in which they were understood by those against whom he wrote. It is unnecessary to give his remarks. Toward the conclusion of them he asks:—

"But do not those who prefer any thing to walking by that Gospel rule which is according to the truth also allege what follows of the conversation with Salome? For, upon her saying, 'I have done well in not bearing children,' as if there were something improper in it, the Lord replied, 'Eat of every herb, but of that which is bitter eat not'; by which words he signifies that celibacy or marriage is a matter within our own choice, neither being enforced by any prohibition of the other."†

* Stromat. III. § 9. pp. 539, 540.

† Ibid. p. 541.

I proceed to the last passage which he quotes. He is here arguing particularly against a writer named Julius Cassian.

"Cassian [in defending his doctrine respecting celibacy] says, Upon Salome's asking when those things should be known concerning which she inquired, the Lord answered, 'When ye shall tread under foot the garment of your shame, and when the two become one, and the male with the female neither male nor female.'"*

By the garments of shame, that is, the garments of skin, which, according to the story in Genesis, God made for Adam and Eve, Cassian, in common with other ancient allegorists, understood human bodies, the flesh, the seat of corruption. The body was the garment of shame which he believed was to be trodden under foot.†

Part of the words ascribed to Christ in the passage last quoted are likewise given as a "saying of the Lord," without reference to any book, in what has been called the "Second

* Stromat. III. § 13. p. 563.

† See the context of the passage in Clement, p. 554, and Beausobre, *Histoire du Manichéisme*, Tom. II. pp. 135, 136.

Epistle of Clement," of Rome, a spurious work, which I have formerly mentioned.*

The words in the passage first quoted† occur in the *Doctrina Orientalis*,‡ as follows: — "When the Saviour said to Salome, 'Death shall continue as long as women bear children,' he did not mean to blame the generation of children." The Gnostic writer, who here quotes the words, rejected, like Clement of Alexandria, the use made of them by the ascetics. He supposed them to have a mystical meaning, referring to Achamoth.

The title of "The Gospel according to the Egyptians" is mentioned by the Author of the Homilies on Luke in the passage before referred to, and after him by three writers who have imitated that passage, namely, Jerome, Titus Bostrensis, and Theophylact.§

Epiphanius, in his article on the Sabellians, after saying that they make use of all the writings both of the Old and of the New Testament, selecting passages to their purpose, adds, — "But their whole error, and the main

* See Vol. I. pp. ccxliii, ccxliv. — The words are found at the end of the fragment of this Epistle which remains.

† See before, p. 241.

‡ § 67. p. 985.

§ Fabricius, I. 335*, note.

support of their error, they derive from certain apocryphal books, particularly that called 'The Egyptian Gospel,' a name which some have given it. For in that there are many things to their purpose, of an obscure, mystical character, which are ascribed to the Saviour; as if he himself had made known to his disciples that the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were the same person."*

An improbable story, resting solely on the testimony of Epiphanius, is not entitled to credit; and this story about the Sabellians is altogether improbable. Epiphanius does not seem to have known even the proper title of the book which he charges them with using. He says that it was called "The Egyptian Gospel"; the other writers who mention it give it the title of "The Gospel according to the Egyptians."

I HAVE quoted all the fragments, and, I believe, mentioned all the notices of this apocryphal gospel which have come down to us. One unaccustomed to such studies might be surprised to see the hypotheses and assertions that have been founded upon them in modern

* Hæres. LXII. § 2. Opp. I. 513, 514.

times. What in fact appears is, that it was an anonymous book, extant in the second century, and probably written in Egypt, in the dark and mystical style that prevailed in that country. In judging of its notoriety and importance, we must compare the few writers who recognize its existence with the far greater number to whom it was unknown, or who were not led by any circumstance to mention it. It was a book of which we should have been ignorant, but for a few incidental notices afforded by writers, none of whom give evidence of having seen it.* Neither Clement, nor any other writer, speaks of it as a Gnostic gospel. It does not appear that it had any particular credit or currency among the generality of the Gnostics. Some ascetics of their number, in maintaining the obligation of celibacy, argued from a passage found in it, as they did undoubtedly from pas-

* That it had not been seen by Clement of Alexandria, from whom our principal information concerning it is derived, appears from his turns of expression in remarking on the quotations from it:—"The words are found, as I suppose (*οἶμαι*), in the Gospel according to the Egyptians";—"They affirm, that the Saviour himself said";—and where, in appealing to a passage in the conversation with Salome, as justifying his own views, he refers to it as quoted by those whom he is opposing, and not as otherwise known to him, thus, "Do they not also allege what follows?" See Jones, I. 206.

sages found in the four Gospels; but other Gnostics, as we have seen from the *Doctrina Orientalis*, rejected their interpretation. The Gnostics did not appeal to it in support of their more distinguishing and fundamental doctrines; for, had they done so, we should have been fully informed of the fact.

As this is the first apocryphal gospel the former existence of which we have clearly ascertained, the question arises, Whether it were or were not a history of Christ's ministry. The only argument of any weight for believing it to have been so is, that it contained a narrative of a pretended conversation of Christ with Salome. But if it were not an historical, but a doctrinal book, there is no difficulty in supposing that the writer might find occasion to insert in it a traditional account of a discourse of Christ. A few such traditional accounts of sayings of our Lord are found in other writers of the first three centuries.* As regards the words ascribed to him in the conversation with Salome, it is evident that the tradition concerning them was false. Our Saviour never expressed himself as he is reported to have done

* See Vol. I. pp. 227 - 229. — Fabricius, I. 321*, seqq. Jones, I. 405, seqq.

in the passages that have been quoted. The writer had an erroneous conception of his character. But if the book had been an historical gospel, this conception would have pervaded it, and would have been prominent in many other particular passages. A history of Christ's ministry, so foreign in its character from the Gospels as this must have been, could not have existed in the last half of the second century, — whether it were a composition of an early age, or a fiction of later times, — without having been an object of far greater attention than what this book received. Especially, had it been brought forward by any sect in opposition to the Gospels, it would have been a primary subject of discussion. But we have seen that the book in question was little regarded or known. It could not, therefore, have been a history of Christ's ministry.

This is the only apocryphal gospel, unless the Gospel according to the Hebrews be regarded as apocryphal, the title of which is mentioned by Clement. According to his present text, he quotes one other without giving its title. But there are good reasons for believing that his text, as it stands, is corrupt, and that there was originally no mention in it of a gospel.*

* Clement (Stromat. V. § 10. p. 684) is treating of the hidden

If this be so, then, with the exception just mentioned of the Gospel according to the Hebrews, supposing that this exception should be

wisdom on which he so much insists. He professes to quote a passage from a prophet, apparently intending Isaiah, though nothing very like it is found in his writings, or elsewhere in the Old Testament. It is this: — "Who shall understand the parable of the Lord [Jehovah], but the wise and understanding and he who loves his Lord!" Clement then, as his text now stands, goes on thus: — "For it is in the power of few to understand these things. For the Lord, though not unwilling to communicate, the prophet says [or, the Scripture says], declared in a certain gospel, 'My secret is for me and the sons of my house.'" — "Οὐ γὰρ φθονῶν, φησὶ, παρήγγειλεν ὁ Κύριος ἐν τῷ εὐαγγελίῳ," κ. τ. λ. I suppose the words "in a certain gospel" to be an interpolation. The passage quoted corresponds to what is found in some copies of the Septuagint at Isaiah xxiv. 16. (See the note on the passage in Potter's edition of Clement, where in the first line "cap. 2" is a misprint for "cap. 24.") The verb φησὶ, *says*, must have for its subject either the prophet mentioned immediately before, or the Scripture (the ellipsis supposed in the last case being not uncommon). But Clement cannot be imagined to have made so incongruous an assertion as that "The prophet says," — or, "The Scripture says," — "that the Lord [Christ] declared in a certain gospel." That he considered himself as borrowing the words, "My secret is for me and my children," not from a certain gospel, but from Isaiah, appears also from the circumstance, that, a few lines after them, he gives a quotation from Isaiah, introducing it with the words, "The prophet says again" (Πάλιν ὁ προφήτης). — I suppose, therefore, that the words "in a certain gospel" were originally a marginal gloss made by a transcriber, who attributed to Christ the declaration quoted by Clement, and who, knowing that it was not found in the four Gospels, thought it must be in some gospel or other. — See Jones, I. 442, seqq.

made, the Gospel according to the Egyptians is the only apocryphal book, bearing the title of a gospel, that is mentioned by any writer during the three centuries succeeding our Lord's death, from which a single quotation is professedly given, or of which it is probable that a single fragment remains.

As I have said, the title of no other apocryphal gospel, used by any Gentile Christians, is mentioned by Clement. But it is desirable to give the fullest information on the subject which we are examining; for, as I have before remarked, it is a subject that requires elucidation rather than argument. I will therefore advert to another work, which he quotes under the name of "The Traditions," and which has been imagined to be the same with an apocryphal gospel called "The Gospel according to Matthias." He speaks of the Traditions in the following passages:—

"To attain wisdom we must begin with wondering at things, as Plato says in his *Theætetus*; and Matthias, in the Traditions, thus concludes:— 'Wonder at present things'; making this the first step of our progress in knowledge."*

* *Stromat.* II. § 9. pp. 452, 453.

In arguing against the licentiousness of the Carpocratians, he adduces another passage, thus : —

“It is said,* likewise, that Matthias also thus taught : — ‘We must contend against the flesh and humble it, granting it no intemperate pleasure, but promote the growth of the soul through faith and knowledge.’”†

He again quotes a passage ascribed to Matthias, for the purpose, as before, of confirming his own doctrine : — “It is said in the Traditions, that Matthias, the Apostle, often repeated, ‘that, if the neighbour of one of the elect sin, he himself has sinned ; for, if he had conducted himself as Reason (the Log-

* λέγουσι γάρ, that is, “*They say*,” “It is said.” Different writers who have spoken of “The Traditions” (as Fabricius, II. 785, Grabe, *Spicilegium*, II. 118, Jones, I. 255, and Lardner, *Works*, I. 410, note f.) have fallen into the error of supposing the Carpocratians or Nicolaitans, against whom Clement is writing, to be the subject of the verb, and consequently of making Clement represent them as quoting a passage directly opposed to the principles he ascribes to them. He himself quotes the passage against them. The next quotation given above from the Traditions is introduced by him in like manner with λέγουσι δέ. — The error has partly arisen from the fact, that some dissolute sectaries did, as Clement mentions, pervert the ascetic maxim, “Abuse the body,” perhaps quoting it ironically. See Vol. II. pp. 131, 160.

† Stromat. III. § 4. p. 523.

os) dictates, his neighbour would have so revered his course of life as not to sin.'” * The language is too unlimited, but the morality is good.

In what is supposed to be a Latin translation of a portion of a lost work of Clement, called “Hypotyposes” or Institutions, there is another strange passage quoted from the Traditions, as agreeing with the conceptions of the writer. Clement, if he be the writer, is commenting on the first words of the First Epistle of John, which — to render as he understood them — are these : — “What was from the beginning, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have heard, and our hands have touched concerning the Logos of life.” He maintains (conformably to what Photius says† was a heresy affirmed by Clement in the work just mentioned), that the Logos who was from the beginning is to be distinguished from the Logos who became incarnate. The latter consisted of those powers of the former which proceeded from him as “a ray from the sun”; and “this ray, coming in the flesh, became an object of touch to the disciples.”

* Stromat. VII. § 13. p. 882.

† Photii Bibliotheca, col. 285. Ed. Schotti.

"Thus," he says, "it is related in the Traditions, that 'John, touching his external body, plunged his hand in, the hardness of the flesh offering no resistance to it, but giving way to the hand of the disciple.' Hence it is that John affirms, 'Our hands have touched concerning the Logos of life'; * that which came in the flesh being made an object of touch."† — As I have formerly remarked,‡ such traditions strikingly illustrate what would have been the state of the history of Jesus in the latter half of the second century, had it not been for the early existence and authoritative character of the Gospels.

There is no reason to suppose that the book called "The Traditions" was in favor with any Gnostics. Clement does not represent it as having been cited by any heretical writer. On the contrary, he himself quotes it as confirming his own opinions. He does not entitle it "The Traditions of Matthias," as it has been called in modern times, but simply "The Traditions." The former title has been given it, because, in the three passages quoted by

* "Propter quod et infert, *Et manus nostræ contractaverunt de verbo vite.*"

† Apud Clementis Fragmenta. Opp. p. 1009.

‡ See before, pp. 180, 181.

Clement in his *Stromata*, the name of Matthias occurs ; and this title having been given it, the book has been fancied by some to be the same with an apocryphal gospel called "The Gospel according to Matthias."

Of this book nothing but the title remains. It is first mentioned by the Author of the *Homilies on Luke* ; after him, by his imitators, Ambrose and Jerome, and also by Eusebius. Possibly the notion that there was such a book may have arisen from the fact mentioned by Clement,* that the Gnostics boasted that their opinions were favored by Matthias, or, in other words, that they taught the Gospel as it was understood by Matthias, the Gospel according to Matthias. Had they possessed a book with that title known to Clement, it seems likely that he would have spoken of it, when thus taking notice of their claim to the countenance of Matthias. Considering the tendency of the fathers to charge the heretics with using books of no authority, the bare titles of supposed apocryphal and heretical works given by the Author of the *Homilies on Luke*, and by writers after the end of the third century, deserve little consideration.

* See before, p. 200.

BEFORE the time of Origen, no other writer besides Irenæus and Clement mentions any apocryphal gospel, real or supposed, except Serapion, as quoted by Eusebius. Serapion, who was bishop of Antioch about the close of the second century, wrote, concerning a gospel called "The Gospel according to Peter," a tract of which Eusebius gives the following account.*

"Another tract was composed by Serapion concerning the Gospel according to Peter, so called, the object of which was to confute the errors contained in it, on account of some in the church at Rhossus who had been led by this book to adopt heterodox opinions. From this it may be worth while to quote a few words in which he expresses his opinion concerning it. 'We, brethren,' he writes, 'acknowledge the authority both of Peter and the other Apostles, as we do that of Christ; but we reject, with good reason, the writings which falsely bear their names, well knowing that such have not been handed down to us. I, indeed, when I was with you, supposed that you were all going on in a right faith, and, not reading through the gospel under the name

* Hist. Eccles. Lib. VI. c. 12.

of Peter which was produced by them [those who were pleased with it], I said, If this is all that troubles you, let the book be read. But having since learnt from what has been told me, that their minds had fallen into some heresy, I hasten to be with you again, brethren, so that you may expect me shortly. Now we, brethren, know that a like heresy was held by Marcion, who also contradicted himself, not comprehending what he said, as you may learn from what has been written to you.* For we have been able to procure this gospel from others who use it, that is, from his followers, who are called *Docetæ* (for the greater part of the opinions in question belong to their system), and, having gone through it, we have found it for the most part conformable to the true doctrine of the Saviour; but there are

* As this sentence is unimportant, and as I believe the present text to be corrupt, I have ventured to render it as perhaps it should be amended. It now stands thus: — 'Ἡμεῖς δὲ, ἀδελφοί, καταλαβόμενοι ὅποιας ἦν αἰρέσεως ὁ Μαρκιανὸς, καὶ ἐαυτῷ ἠκρωτιούτο, μὴ νοῶν ἃ ἐλάλει, ἃ μαθήσεσθε ἐξ ὧν ὑμῖν ἐγράφη. Ἐδυνήθημεν γὰρ παρ' ἄλλων, κ. τ. λ. I would read the first words as follows: — 'Ἡμεῖς δὲ, ἀδελφοί, καταλάβομεν ὅτι ὁμοίας ἦν αἰρέσεως ὁ Μαρκίων, ὃς καὶ ἐαυτῷ ἠκρωτιούτο, κ. τ. λ.

There is also some uncertainty about the precise meaning of the next sentence; but, fortunately, this uncertainty does not extend to any thing important in the paragraph.

some things exceptionable,* which we subjoin for your information.' ”

We may conclude, from this account, that the Gospel of Peter was not a history of Christ's ministry. Serapion would not have regarded with such indifference as he first manifested a history of our Lord, ascribed to the Apostle Peter, which he had not before seen. Were it genuine, it must have been to him, as to any one else, an object of great interest. But the supposition of its genuineness is too extravagant to require discussion. — Nor can we suppose it to have been an original history (that is to say, not a compilation from any one or more of the four Gospels), which, though not the work of Peter, was yet entitled to credit. For it is impossible that the existence of such a history should not have been notorious ; that it should not have been a frequent subject of remark ; that it should have been unknown to Serapion, himself a bishop and a controversial writer ; or, even if previously unknown, that it should not at once have excited his attention. — Nor can it have been a history founded upon one or more

* τὰ μὲν πλεῖστα τοῦ ὀρθοῦ λόγου τοῦ Σωτῆρος, τινὰ δὲ προσδι-
σταλμένα.

of the four Gospels, with certain additions favoring the opinions of the Docetæ. When we recollect the abundant notices of Marcion's gospel, which was only a mutilated copy of Luke's, it cannot be believed that there was another historical book extant among Marcion's followers, of a similar character (except that it contained some obnoxious additions), of which the notices are so scanty, and which is never mentioned as an *historical* book. — There is still another supposition; that it was a history undeserving of credit, a history containing many fabulous accounts. But this is inconsistent with the manner in which Serapion mentions it; for he speaks of it with but slight censure, commending the generality of its contents; as no catholic writer of his time would have spoken of such a professed history of Christ's ministry as we have last imagined.

The Gospel according to Peter, then, was not an *historical* book; and this appears, not merely from what has been said, but from the fact, that neither Serapion nor Eusebius gives any intimation that it bore that character. Serapion's treatise was in the hands of Eusebius, as it probably had been in those of many before him. It treated of the errors in the book; it was written to refute them; and, had these

errors consisted in false narratives concerning Christ, there is no reasonable doubt that plenary evidence of the fact would have existed, both in the writings of Serapion and Eusebius, and in those of other fathers. It appears that it was used by the Gnostics, and, had it been a professed history of Christ's ministry used by them, we should certainly have had much more full information concerning it. The supposition that it was not an historical book, and this alone, it may be further observed, agrees with the manner in which Serapion describes it, as "for the most part conformable to the true doctrine" (not the true history) "of the Saviour, but containing some things exceptionable."

The book, it may be added, was not of any importance or notoriety. Serapion, bishop of Antioch, in his time the principal see in the East, was, as we have seen, unacquainted with it, till his attention was called to it by some Christians of his diocese, as favoring heretical doctrines. We may conclude, therefore, that it was unknown to a great majority of Christians, his contemporaries. Besides the notice of it by him, we find the following passage in Origen:—"Some say that the brothers of Jesus were the sons of Joseph by a wife to

whom he was married before Mary, relying upon the tradition in the Gospel according to Peter or the book of James." * It is also referred to by Eusebius and Jerome, who mention it as an apocryphal work falsely ascribed to Peter. Eusebius especially enumerates it among those books which were brought forward by the heretics under the names of Apostles; such as no writer of the Church had thought worth commemorating, they being altogether devoid of good sense and piety. No fragment of it remains, and these are all the notices of it found in the first four centuries.

We now come to Origen. It is doubtful whether the Homilies on Luke, which have been so often mentioned in this Chapter, are to be referred to him as their author.† If they are not, there is no passage in all Origen's works in which he speaks of an apocryphal gospel as used by any Gentile Christians, catholic or heretical, besides that relating to the Gospel of Peter which has just been quoted. Of the book of James, mentioned in connection with it, I shall speak hereafter.

* Comment. in Matth. Tom. x. Opp. III. 462, 463.

† See the Preface to the third volume of De la Rue's edition of Origen.

I HAVE remarked on three titles of apocryphal gospels mentioned by the Author of the Homilies on Luke. There is one other, "The Gospel according to Thomas," to which likewise I shall advert hereafter.

BESIDES those writers whom I have quoted, there is none who speaks of apocryphal gospels before Eusebius, in the first half of the fourth century. He enumerates among heretical books, "altogether absurd and irreligious," three of those already mentioned, namely, the gospels of Peter, Thomas,* and Matthias,* but gives no further information concerning them, and adds no new title to the list.

I HAVE brought down the inquiry respecting apocryphal gospels to a much later period than was necessary. No one will suppose that a book of which there is no mention before the fourth century could have served the Gnostics as a basis for their doctrines. If any book appeared after the commencement of the fourth century, pretending to be an original history of Christ's ministry, — of which we have no proof, and which, in the nature of things, is alto-

* Hist. Eccles. Lib. III. c. 25.

gether improbable, — no one will imagine that it was entitled to regard. Of any book of an early age, purporting to give an account of his ministry different from that contained in the four Gospels, it is a moral impossibility that we should not have received full and unequivocal information from writers before the time of Eusebius.

THERE is no reason, as I conceive, to suppose that the apocryphal gospels which have been mentioned, or the other apocryphal books extant during the first three centuries, were commonly written with the fraudulent design of furnishing the pretended authority of Jesus or his Apostles in support of false doctrines or spurious history ; or that, when they bore the name of an Apostle, it was intended that they should be ascribed to him as his proper work. The author of such a book may have put his own opinions into the mouth of an Apostle by a common rhetorical artifice, as Plato in his dialogues introduces Socrates and Timæus as teaching his doctrines ; or as if one, at the present day, were to publish a work calling it “ The Gospel as taught by (*according to*) St. Paul,” or “ The Gospel as taught by St. James.” Of this mode of writing we have

a remarkable example in the Clementine Homilies, the author of which could have intended no deception. But the whole account given in them of the actions of Peter is a fiction, and the discourses ascribed to him contain only the writer's own views of the character of Christianity. According, however, to the ancient use of language, this book might have been, and possibly was, called "The Gospel according to Peter." Such books might be, or it might be fancied that they were, founded on some traditionary information respecting the teaching of an Apostle. Thus a book called "The Preaching of Peter," or "The Preaching of Peter and Paul," was regarded both by Clement of Alexandria and by Lactantius as a work of some authority. Lactantius supposed it to be a record of their preaching while together at Rome.* Clement quotes it in the same manner as he quotes "The Traditions" before mentioned, and the works of the Pagan philosophers, not in evidence of facts, but as corresponding with and confirming his own opinions.

Irenæus speaks, as we have seen, of a gospel by Judas Iscariot. There was reported

* Institut. Lib. IV. c. 21.

to be another under the name of Matthias, and another under the name of Thomas; but these titles are not mentioned before the third century. Of the books or of the titles which have been enumerated, bearing the names of Apostles, there is besides only the Gospel of Peter, which became known to Serapion about the close of the second century. But it is altogether incredible that any Gentile Christian in the second century should have engaged in so hopeless and foolish an attempt, as to endeavour to pass off a composition of his own as a gospel written by an Apostle, — a gospel which had never before been heard of. Nor is it much more likely that any Gentile Christian, without ascribing his work to an Apostle, would, after the destruction of Jerusalem, have pretended to give an original history of Christ's ministry at variance with the four Gospels. As we have already seen, there is no evidence that any such work existed.

The subject of the apocryphal gospels has, as it was natural it should, attracted much attention. It is a subject which deserved to be thoroughly examined. But the unavoidable consequence of the manner in which it has been treated has been to produce a very false impression of their importance. They were ob-

scure writings, very little regarded or known by any Christians, catholic or heretical. We find in Justin Martyr and Tertullian nothing concerning them; in Irenæus, two titles, one purporting to be that of a book, which most probably was not extant, and the other likewise perhaps originating in mistake, but supposed to belong to a Valentinian gospel, which there is no evidence that the Valentinians ever appealed to. Clement gives some extracts from a gospel which he found quoted by the Encratites or ascetics. Serapion mentions the Gospel of Peter, as in the hands of persons belonging to a parish in his diocese, called Rhossus, and as used by some of the Docetæ. Origen once refers to the same book. And the Author of the Homilies on Luke adds three other titles of books of which he gives no account.*

* I have not adverted in the text to one title mentioned by the Author of the Homilies, namely, "The Gospel according to the Twelve Apostles"; because, as we learn from Jerome (*Advers. Pelagianos*, Lib. III. Opp. T. IV. P. II. col. 533), this was only a name which was sometimes given to the Gospel of the Hebrews. It may naturally have had its origin in the circumstance, that the Hebrew Christians affirmed, that the Gospel of Matthew, which alone they used, contained the Gospel as taught by the Apostles, or, in other words, was the Gospel according to the Apostles. But there is something more to be observed. The title given is not simply "The Gospel according to the Apostles," but "The Gospel according to the *Twelve* Apostles." The Hebrew Chris-

These are all the notices of apocryphal gospels to be found in all the writers of Christian antiquity before the end of the third century. Had they been works of any notoriety, works possessing any intrinsic or accidental importance, we should have had page after page of controversy, discussion, and explanation concerning them.

About the beginning of the last century, a manuscript was made known of a gospel ascribed to Barnabas, in the Italian language, but supposed to be translated from the Arabic. It is the work of a Mahometan, or a work interpolated by a Mahometan. Much more has been written by different authors about this book * than all that is to be found in the Christian writers of the first three centuries concerning apocryphal gospels. Yet it is a book of which, probably, few of my readers

tians, generally, did not recognize the Apostleship of St. Paul, but regarded him as a false teacher. They revolted at his doctrine of the abolition of their Law, and of their peculiar national distinctions. Hence they may have called their Gospel the Gospel according to the *Twelve* Apostles, of whose number he was not, in order to imply that it was from the twelve Apostles, and not from him, the preacher to the Gentiles, that the true doctrines of the Gospel were to be learned.

* See Fabricius, III. 373, seqq., Jones, I. 162, seqq., Sale's Translation of the Koran (Ed. 1825), in his Preliminary Discourse, p. 102, and in his Notes, Vol. I. pp. 61, 170; and the works referred to by the authors mentioned.

have ever heard; and of which he who has known any thing may have forgotten what he knew. It is easy to apply this fact to assist ourselves in judging of the importance to be attached to the notices of apocryphal gospels found in the fathers.

It may seem as if, in reference to our present inquiry, any further discussion of the subject must be useless; and it would be so, but for the misapprehensions which have existed concerning it. There are some fabulous books still extant, which, thus standing as it were in the foreground, are more likely, at first view, to be taken for true representatives of ancient apocryphal gospels, than those titles and fragments, appearing in the remote distance, with which alone we are in fact concerned. These books have, in modern times, been called "*Gospels of the Nativity of the Virgin Mary*," and "*Gospels of the Infancy*," that is, of the infancy of Jesus. They have, likewise, directly or indirectly, been brought into competition with the four Gospels. But whatever tends to weaken the exclusive authority of the catholic Gospels, or to confound them in the same class with fabulous writings, opens the way for a vague conjecture that there may have been in early times other histories of

the ministry of Christ at variance with those Gospels, and entitled to as much or more credit. We will, therefore, go on to take notice of the works referred to.

IN the quotation that I have given from Origen,* besides the mention of the Gospel of Peter, there is mention, likewise, of a book of James. About the middle of the sixteenth century, the celebrated visionary Postel brought to the notice of European scholars a work written in Greek, a manuscript of which he found in the East. It is a book of about a quarter of the size of the Gospel of Mark. He entitled it "The Protevangelion (that is, the First-Gospel) of St. James the Less";† — the pretended events which it relates being supposed by him to have occurred prior to those recorded by St. Mark, to whose Gospel he fancied it intended for an introduction. But a number of manuscripts of it are now known, and the title Protevangelion is not supported by their authority.‡

* See before, pp. 259, 260.

† The work has been republished by Fabricius, Jones, and Thilo.

‡ Its title is given with much diversity in different manuscripts, but in all its variations expresses that the subject of the work is a History of the Nativity of Mary. In what is supposed to be the oldest manuscript it runs thus: — "A Narration and History how

The author, in the conclusion of the work, gives his name as James. It is a collection of legendary fables, principally concerning the nativity of the Virgin Mary, her history and that of Joseph, and the nativity of Jesus. The nativity of the Virgin is represented to have been miraculous, like that of Samuel, and to have been announced by an angel. Some things are interwoven from the first two chapters ascribed to Matthew, and from the account of our Saviour's birth given by Luke. There are two coincidences of its narrative with what is found in ancient authors, which deserve notice. The first relates to the passage of Origen just referred to.

Origen says, that, conformably to the book of James, the individuals called in the Gospels the brothers* of Jesus were children of Joseph by a former wife. In the Protevangelion, Mary is represented as having been dedicated by her parents as a virgin to the service of God in the

the superholy Mother of God (ἡ ὑπερᾶγία Θεοτόκος) was born." (Thilo, p. liii.) But the book is not confined to a mere account of the nativity of Mary; it extends (as appears above) to the history of her life.

* The word in the original, ἀδελφοί, should be rendered *kinsmen*, according to a common use of it. It does not in the passage in question denote brothers, in the limited sense of the English word.

Temple, but at the age of twelve years as having been removed thence by the priests, and committed in trust to Joseph, with the purpose of her becoming his wife. Before receiving her, he is represented as saying, "I am an old man and have children." * The story, that Joseph, when he married Mary, was an old man with children by a former wife, is found in many writers after the middle of the fourth century.

One of the fables in this book is, that Mary after childbirth remained in all respects as a virgin.† The story is referred to and countenanced by Clement of Alexandria.‡ Tertullian, on the contrary, in contending against those Gnostics who asserted that the body of Christ was not a body of flesh and blood, and that it was in no part derived from his mother, insists on his proper birth, and incidentally represents it as in all respects like that of others.§ It is not, however, to be inferred that the Gnostics maintained the opinion just mentioned; for, on the one hand, the Marcionites denied altogether

* Protevangelion, c. 9.

† Ibid. cc. 19, 20.

‡ 'Αλλ', ὡς ἔοικεν, τοῖς πολλοῖς καὶ μέχρι νῦν δοκεῖ ἡ Μαριάμ λεχὼ εἶναι διὰ τὴν τοῦ παιδίου γέννησιν, οὐκ οὔσα λεχὼ· καὶ γὰρ μετὰ τὸ τεκεῖν αὐτὴν μαιωθεῖσαν φασὶ τινες παρθένον εὐρεθῆναι. Stromat. VII. § 16. pp. 889, 890.

§ In his tract De Carne Christi.

the nativity of Christ; and, on the other, that opinion was not necessarily connected with the doctrine of the theosophic Gnostics, who ascribed to Christ a body, though not a human body. But, with a strange approximation to the Gnostic denial of the proper body of Christ, it has become the established faith of the Roman Catholic church.* It was made an article of orthodox belief by the Lateran Council, held under Pope Martin the First in the year 649.

Unless Origen, under the name of the book of James, refers to some work like the Protevangelion, that is, to some pretended history of the mother of our Lord, which may have served for the foundation of that now extant, there is no mention of any such work before the latter half

* "Il convient toutefois qu'il est de la foi catholique, que Marie est demeurée Vierge après l'enfantement comme devant." Fleury, Hist. Ecclée. An. 847. — In the Catechism of the Council of Trent (P. I. Art. 3. n. 13) it is said, — "Præterea, quo nihil admirabilius dici omnino, aut cogitari potest, nascitur [Christus] ex matre sine ullâ maternæ virginitatis diminutione, et quo modo postea ex sepulcro clauso et obsignato egressus est, atque ad discipulos clausis januis introivit: vel, ne a rebus etiam, quæ a naturâ quotidie fieri videmus, discedatur, quo modo solis radii concretam vitri substantiam penetrant, neque frangunt tamen, aut aliquâ ex parte lædunt; simili, inquam, et altiori modo Jesus Christus ex materno alvo, sine ullo maternæ virginitatis detrimento, editus est, ipsius enim incorruptam virginitatem verissimis laudibus celebramus."

of the fourth century. In the fourth and fifth centuries, it seems probable that there was more than one narrative of this kind in existence; but that these narratives were generally regarded as fabulous and worthless.* During the ages of darkness that followed, the legends concerning the Virgin found favor, in common with other fables which overspread ecclesiastical and profane history. They have entered into the established mythology of the Roman Catholic church, and have furnished conceptions for its great masters in the art of painting. But the particular book we are considering, the Protevangelion, never obtained such credit in the West as in the East. In the West, its existence had become unknown before it was brought to light by Postel. In the East, it seems probable that it was at one period read in some churches on certain holydays, in the same manner as the legends of Saints were read on their festivals.† The oldest manuscript of it now known is referred to the tenth century.‡

The fables respecting the nativity and history of Mary, like those which went to the compila-

* Thilo, p. lx, seqq.; p. xci, seqq. Conf. Epiphanius, *Hæres.* XXIV. § 12. p. 94.

† Thilo, pp. lix, lx.

‡ Ibid. p. liii.

tion of other apocryphal writings, being destitute of all authority, were recast in different forms by different hands. They are extant, with much diversity from the Protevangelion, in a work found in two Latin manuscripts, one of the fourteenth and the other of the fifteenth century,* in which they are connected at the end with a few stories of miracles performed by our Lord in his infancy.† In Latin, also, there is another work, shorter and less extravagant than those which have been mentioned, relating to the birth and history of Mary, of which the modern title is "The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary."‡ Of this the pretended Hebrew original was ascribed to the Apostle Matthew, and the translation to Jerome. The fiction by which Jerome is represented as its translator shows that its composition must have been later than the fourth century.

WE proceed to the Books of the Infancy.—As I have mentioned, the Author of the Homilies on Luke gives the title of a Gospel according to Thomas; and the same title is found in

* Thilo, p. cviii.

† The work is published by Thilo under the title of "*Historia de Nativitate Mariæ et de Infantiâ Salvatoris.*"

‡ It may be found in Fabricius, Jones, and Thilo.

subsequent writers.* We may conjecture it to have been one of those professed expositions of Christianity which were called "gospels." Nor is there any thing in the ancient writers who mention it to countenance a different supposition. But there is now extant in Greek a collection of fables concerning the infancy and childhood of Jesus, which is not, in the manuscripts of it, entitled "a gospel," but the writer of which announces himself as Thomas an Israelite.† This book has been thought to be essentially the same with the gospel mentioned by the Author of the Homilies, and to have been in existence in the second century. But of such books, more or less resembling one another, there are a number extant, which have passed in modern times under the name of "Gospels of the Infancy."

One of this number (much larger than the book ascribed to Thomas in its present state) is written in Arabic. It was published with a Latin translation in the year 1697, by Henry Sike, Professor of the Oriental Languages in the University of Cambridge.‡ With this the

* See Fabricius, I. 131, seqq. Thilo, lxxix, seqq.

† A fragment, the first part, of this book may be found in Fabricius and Jones. The whole, as now extant, is given by Thilo.

‡ The Latin version has been republished by Fabricius and Jones, and the original with the version, by Thilo.

name of Thomas is not connected. It consists of stories of pretended miracles, which accompanied the birth and infancy of our Saviour, and which he himself performed when a child. There is some fancy in these fictions. They have a tinge of Eastern invention, but are essentially of the same character as the common legends of the Middle Ages. The relater sometimes refers to facts in the Gospels, and connects his story with them. Thus he gives a narrative concerning two robbers, whom he represents as the same afterwards crucified with Jesus.* These and similar fables became popular in the East, particularly among the followers of Mahomet. Two of them appear in the Koran,† and others have been current among Mahometan writers.‡

The compilation in Greek that bears the name of Thomas has a general correspondence with the last half of the preceding. Omitting those pretended miracles which accompanied

* Cap. 23.

† One is of Christ's speaking while in his cradle (Arabic Gospel of the Infancy, c. 1), which he did according to the Koran, ch. 3. Vol. I. p. 58, and ch. 19. Vol. II. p. 145. The other is of his making birds of clay to which he gave life (Arabic Gospel, capp. 36, 46), which is referred to in the Koran, ch. 3. Vol. I. p. 59, and ch. 5. Vol. I. p. 139.

‡ See Sike's notes (republished by Thilo).

the nativity and infancy of Jesus, it begins with those performed in his childhood. Of these, about half the stories in one work correspond to those in the other, though the order in which they are arranged is not the same, and they are often differently told. Both works imply a very low state of intellect and morals in those by whom and for whom they were written. In some of the fictions, Jesus, as a child, is represented as violent and cruel, so that his father, Joseph, is introduced as saying, — “From this time we will not suffer him to go out of the house; for whoever makes him angry is killed.”* The notions of the writer of either book seem in this respect to have been derived from the use of power by an Oriental despot.

A similar collection of fables appears to be, or to have been, extant in different languages of the East.† Several manuscript collections of them are extant in Latin, more or less diverse from one another, and from the Arabic and the Greek compilation. One only of these is known to bear the name of Thomas. The author’s name is otherwise given as Matthew

* Arabic Gospel, c. 49. Gospel of Thomas, c. 14.

† Thilo, p. xxxii, seqq.

the Evangelist, or James the son of Joseph (to whom the Protevangelion is ascribed); and in one copy the pretended authors are Onesimus and John the Evangelist.*

In regard to these fables respecting the infancy and childhood of Jesus, we find an early notice of one of them in Irenæus. He is giving an account of a sect, before mentioned, the Marcosians, who believed, like the Jewish Cabalists, that there were profound mysteries hidden in the letters of the alphabet.† After speaking of their perversion of the Scriptures, Irenæus says : —

“Moreover, they bring forward an unspeakable number of apocryphal and spurious writings, which they have fabricated, to confound the simple, and such as are ignorant of those writings which contain the truth. To this end, they also adopt that fiction concerning our Lord, that, when he was a child, and learning the alphabet, his master, as usual, told him to say Alpha (A), and that, upon his repeating Alpha, when his master next told him to say Beta (B), the Lord replied, ‘Do you first tell me what Alpha is, and then I will tell you what Beta is.’ And this they explain as showing that he alone

* Thilo, p. cv, seqq.

† See before, p. 152, seqq.



knew the mystery, which he revealed, in the letter Alpha." *

• We may first incidentally remark on this passage, that the many apocryphal books fabricated by the Marcosians could have had but a short-lived existence, and were but of little note; since no one of them is specified by name in any writer; nor does Irenæus in his long article on the sect, nor any other writer, refer elsewhere to any use which the Marcosians made of them. It may next be observed, that the passage is remarkable as affording one of the only two examples, which are reported by the writers during the three centuries succeeding the death of our Lord, of an argument for a Gnostic doctrine, founded on a narrative concerning him not related in the Gospels.† But that this narrative was already incorporated into a collection of like stories does not appear from Irenæus. His words, on the contrary, rather imply that it was not. "In addition," he says, to their apocryphal books, for this is the force of his language, "they adopt for the same purpose that

* Cont. Hæres. Lib. I. c. 20. p. 91.

† The other example which I refer to is the use, before mentioned (see p. 241, seqq.), which was made by the Encratites of a passage in the Gospel of the Egyptians.

fiction," a well-known fiction, as is implied, "concerning the Lord." *

This fiction has become the foundation of two different stories in the Arabic compilation,† and of three in the Greek,‡ in the former our Saviour being represented as having had two successive schoolmasters, and in the latter, three; and, as might be expected from its antiquity, none of the fables of the same class appears to have been more widely circulated.§

* " Προσπαλαμβάνουσι δὲ εἰς τοῦτο καὶ ἐκεῖνο τὸ θαυμάσιον," κ. τ. λ.

† Capp. 48, 49.

‡ Capp. 6, 7, 8, 14, 15.

§ "As to the life of Jesus Christ," says Chardin, "the Persian legends contain not only what is in the Gospels, but likewise all the tales found in the legends of the Eastern Christians, and particularly in an Armenian legend, entitled *l'Evangile Enfant*,* which is nothing but a tissue of fabulous miracles; such, for example, as that Jesus, seeing Joseph much troubled at having cut a board of cedar too short, said to him: — 'Why are you so troubled! Give me one end of the board and pull the other, and it will grow longer.' Another story is, that, being sent to school to learn the alphabet, his master directed him to pronounce A; he paused and said to his master, — 'Tell me, first, why the first letter of the alphabet is formed as it is.' Upon this, his master treating him as a talkative little child, he answered, — 'I will not say A, till you tell me why the first letter is made as it is.' But his master growing angry, he said to him, — 'I will instruct you, then. The first letter of the alphabet is formed of three perpendicular lines on a horizontal line — (the Armenian

* The title is so rendered by Chardin.

During a long interval after Irenæus, we hear nothing more of fables respecting the infancy and childhood of Christ. There is nothing necessarily miraculous in the supposed fact related in the story which he quotes ; on the contrary, none but the Marcosians, or those who entertained like notions with them of the mysterious significance of the letters of the alphabet, could have inferred from it any supernatural knowledge in the infant Jesus. Epiphanius is the first writer who distinctly refers to stories of fabulous miracles performed by Jesus in his childhood ; and these stories he does not altogether reject. The miracle at the marriage feast at Cana, he says, was the first performed by Jesus, "except, perhaps, those which he is reported to have performed in his youth, in play as it were, according to what some say." *

A is thus formed, very like an inverted *m*)—to teach us that the Beginning of all things is one Essence in three Persons.' " *Voyages en Perse*, Tom. II. pp. 269, 270. Ed. 4to. 1735.

The difference between the Armenian version of the story of the alphabet and that given by the Marcosians shows the changes to which fables of this sort were exposed.—Two stories different from each other, but both corresponding essentially to the marvel of lengthening the cedar board, are found, one in the Arabic Gospel (c. 39), and the other in the Gospel of Thomas (c. 13).

• *Hæres.* LI. § 20. *Opp.* I. 442.

After him, Chrysostom expresses his opinion, that the miracle of Cana was the first performed by our Saviour, and rejects, as wholly undeserving of credit, the fables concerning miracles performed by him in his childhood.*

As regards the book now extant, of which the author calls himself Thomas, it could not have been that referred to by the Author of the Homilies on Luke, and subsequently by some other ancient writers, under the name of the Gospel of Thomas, for it is evidently a composition of the Middle Ages. All, it would seem, that can be meant by those modern writers who have regarded the two books as the same, is, that the one anciently called the Gospel of Thomas served as a basis for the present compilation of fables. But the present book bears so thoroughly, in its matter and style, the character of an age far later than that in which the Gospel of Thomas is first mentioned, that, should we attempt to separate this character from it, we should find that nothing would be left. Besides, of those different compilations of fables that have been mentioned, only one set professes to have been written by

* Homil. in Joannem, XX. col. 132. Ed. 1697. Homil. XVI. col. 108. Homil. XXII. col. 124.
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an author called Thomas ; and no copy which bears his name assumes to be called a gospel. The supposition, that the ancient Gospel of Thomas was so remarkable a book, as one containing a collection of stories respecting our Lord's childhood must have been regarded during the first three centuries, cannot be reconciled with the facts, that we are not informed of its contents by any ancient writer ; that it is not quoted under that name by any ancient writer ; that those who mention the fables do not speak of the Gospel of Thomas, and that those who mention the Gospel of Thomas do not speak of the fables.*

* There is another book that has been reckoned among apocryphal writings, "The Gospel of Nicodemus," so called, of which, when the first edition of this work was published, it did not seem to me that there was occasion to give an account in relation to the argument before us, or that there would be any propriety in doing so incidentally. But I have remarked that one of the most noted modern champions of infidelity, Strauss, in treating of the death of our Lord (and elsewhere), often quotes it, and compares its statements with those of the Evangelists ; as he has also quoted, in like manner, the Protevangelion of James, the History of the Nativity of Mary (see before, p. 273), and the Gospels of the Infancy.

The Gospel of Nicodemus is equally fabulous with the books just mentioned. The Greek original has been published, from a collation of different copies, with elaborate notes, by Thilo. A Latin translation, which differs from it in many particulars, may be found in Fabricius and Jones. The copies of this book,

BUT, it may be asked, were the fables contained in the Protevangelion and the Books of

like those of others of the same class, vary much from one another.

According to the Greek text, a person who announces himself as Ananias, a Jew, says, that, in the reign of Theodosius (his blunders in chronology are such as to leave it uncertain whether he meant the first or second emperor of that name), he had discovered this book; that it was written originally in Hebrew by Nicodemus, and that he had translated it into Greek.

The book which follows this proem consists, first, of an account of the trial of our Lord before Pilate, founded on the relations of the Evangelists. It is swelled by a narrative of the appearance before Pilate of many who had been the subjects or witnesses of his miracles, — miracles recorded in the Gospels, — who are introduced as testifying in his favor. Then, after an account of his death and burial, follows a marvellous story respecting Joseph of Arimathea, who is represented as having been persecuted by the Jews on account of the honor paid by him to the body of Jesus, and to have been delivered from confinement by Jesus immediately after his own resurrection; and narratives of individuals supposed to have witnessed the ascension of our Lord, and to have testified to this fact before the Jewish Sanhedrim.

Here it seems probable that the book originally ended. But in some manuscripts a conclusion is found, which consists of an account of our Lord's descent to Hades, and of his carrying away thence the souls of the just who had died before his time. It is given in the form of a deposition before the Sanhedrim of two of the dead, who were present in Hades upon the occasion, which deposition they themselves committed to writing, and gave into the hands of Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus. This concluding legend appears to have been the immediate source of those conceptions respecting our Lord's descent to Hell, or the



the Infancy ever really believed? The question falls into the same wide class with many

“Harrowing of Hell,” as it was called in old English literature, which were common in the latter part of the Middle Ages.

Such is the Gospel of Nicodemus. It is not named by any Greek or Latin father; nor is there any clear proof of its existence till a very late period. (See the *Testimonia et Censura* collected by Fabricius, L. 214-237, and the *Prolegomena* of Thilo.) There would be no greater want of good-sense in quoting a miracle-play of the Middle Ages for the purpose of confronting its representations with those of the Evangelists, than what appears in quoting for this end the Gospel of Nicodemus; or, it may be added, in thus quoting the Protevangelion of James, the History of the Nativity, and the Gospels of the Infancy.

BUT as this book has been mentioned, it may be well to enter into some further explanation respecting it. There has been, as I conceive, a great confusion of ideas concerning it, arising from the error of giving it the additional name of “The Acts of Pilate.” This error appears to have had its origin from two passages in the History of the Franks by Gregory of Tours, written in the latter part of the sixth century. In the first of these passages (Lib. I. cap. 21) Gregory makes a very brief mention of the imprisonment of Joseph of Arimathea by the chief-priests (the story before referred to), which he says was related in the Acts of Pilate (*Gesta Pilati*), sent by him to the Emperor Tiberius; and in the second (Ibid. c. 24) he mentions these Acts again, as containing information, given by Pilate to the Emperor, of the miracles, death, and passion of Jesus, and as being still extant. The circumstance, that in the first passage he has referred to the persecution of Joseph of Arimathea, which is related in the Gospel of Nicodemus, has led to the belief that this work is, or was originally, the same book with the Acts of Pilate. But the argument would in no case avail to prove this identity, since the author of the

others, to all which a common answer is to be given. Were the legends with which the

Gospel of Nicodemus may, equally with Gregory, have derived the story, directly or indirectly, from some book which bore that title. It may even be that Gregory himself furnished him with the germ of his fable.

Here two questions arise : — What was the original meaning of that title, “The Acts of Pilate” ? and how must it be understood in relation to the subject before us ?

The accounts which the Roman provincial governors were accustomed to send to the Emperor of their own doings and of remarkable events in their respective provinces were sometimes called Acts (*Acta* in Latin, or, as written in Greek letters, *Ἔκτα*). There can be little doubt that Pilate did send home such an account relating to Jesus. Rumors concerning him must have reached Rome ; and his reputed miracles and claims, and the circumstances connected with his history and death, were not matters to be passed over in silence in the reports of a procurator who was under the eye of Tiberius.

Accordingly, Justin and Tertullian in their Apologies refer briefly in general terms to the account of Pilate, which Justin calls his Acts, as confirming their statements respecting the miracles and death of Jesus. But it is not probable that either of them had seen an authentic copy of those Acts, or that such copies were ever in circulation. They either spoke from private information, direct or indirect ; or, perhaps, inferred from the nature of the case, that the account given by Pilate must tend to confirm their own.

In the beginning of the fourth century, according to the relation of Eusebius (*Hist. Eccles. Lib. IX. c. 5. Conf. Lib. I. cc. 9, 11*), during the persecution under Maximin, pretended Acts of Pilate, full of calumnies against our Lord, were fabricated and zealously circulated.

Afterward, as we learn from Epiphanius (*Hæres. L. Opp. I. 490*), there were extant among Christians, in the fourth century,

whole history of Christendom was swarming from the fourth century to the fifteenth really

other spurious Acts of Pilate, which were appealed to by certain heretics, in proof that our Lord suffered on the eighth of the Calends of April, the anniversary of which day they commemorated. Epiphanius says (but whether truly or not may be a question) that he had seen copies of those Acts giving a different date. The author of a Homily ascribed to Chrysostom (Chrysostomi Opp. V. 942. Ed. Sayil.) says that the day of our Lord's death was known from the Acts of Pilate to be the eighth of the Calends of April. The same date is also found in the Gospel of Nicodemus.

This is the sum of all the information concerning any real or pretended Acts of Pilate furnished by all the writers before Gregory of Tours.

No one can be supposed to imagine that the Gospel of Nicodemus is either the authentic Acts of Pilate referred to by Justin and Tertullian, or those spurious Acts which were put into circulation during the persecution under Maximin. It follows, that those who believe the Gospel to be the same book with the Acts must believe it to be the Acts of which Epiphanius speaks, of the contents of which we know nothing, except that they specified a particular day as that of our Lord's death.

But this belief must be entertained in opposition to the clear and decisive evidence furnished by the book itself.

The Greek Gospel published by Thilo begins with a statement that the Hebrew original was found and translated into Greek in the seventeenth year of Theodosius, the first or second of that name. At the end of the Latin version edited by Fabricius, Theodosius the Great is said to have discovered it in the Prætorium of Pilate at Jerusalem, which extraordinary story shows that the times of Theodosius must have been to the author of this version a fabulous age. No copy of the work assigns an earlier date for its discovery.

But no one will credit the fable of a Hebrew original of the

believed? How was it with the mythology and marvels of Greek and Roman Paganism, interwoven as they were with the religious sen-

book. The Greek text is the original; and this, it appears, claims for itself no higher antiquity than the end of the fourth century or the beginning of the fifth. It is probably of much later date. But on its own showing it could not have been the book quoted, as Epiphanius reports, under the name of the Acts of Pilate, by heretics in the fourth century.

The character of the Gospel of Nicodemus is such as to render the supposition utterly incredible, that any one could have put it forth under the name of the Acts of Pilate, that title being understood, as it undoubtedly was during the first four centuries, to denote an official account of his doings concerning Jesus sent by Pilate to the Emperor. It has nothing of the nature or form of an official communication. It is a legendary fable. There is no inscription to Tiberius, nor any address to him throughout the book.

Nor is it pretended in the book itself that Pilate was its author. According to its own statement, it was composed by Nicodemus. In the Greek copies, there is no mention of Pilate as having any thing to do with it. Nor does it appear that the title, Acts of Pilate, was given it in any manuscript, Greek or Latin. In an addition made in Latin copies (Thilo, p. 788), it is said that Pilate, having been informed by Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus of all that passed in the Jewish Sanhedrim, "wrote all which had been done and said by the Jews concerning Jesus (*omnia quæ gesta et dicta sunt de Jesu a Judæis*), and put all the words in the public books of his Prætorium." This story, and the words "*omnia quæ gesta*," may perhaps have countenanced the error of calling it the Acts of Pilate, *Gesta Pilati*. But the only title which could with any plausibility be derived from the passage would be "Acts of the Jews," *Gesta Judæorum*, meaning, in a sense of the word *Gesta* familiar in the Middle Ages, "Deeds (or Doings) of the Jews." — *Note to 2d Edition*, 1847.

timents and rites and daily usages of the most enlightened nations of antiquity? Had the Egyptians a true faith that a particular bull was their god Apis? Did they believe in the divinity of the Crocodile and the Ibis? What was their state of mind in respect to their other gods, — *qualia demens Ægyptus portenta colebat*, — with all the strange and disgusting histories attached to them? How has it been with the Hindus, one of the few nations out of the European family which have approached to European intelligence? Have they believed or not the enormous fables — that even a healthy imagination shrinks from — which are reported as true in their sacred books? How much of the history of human opinions on all the higher subjects of thought is a history of human errors, — often of errors the most repulsive to reason, yet widely prevailing, and obstinately maintained from century to century. Have not those errors been believed?

The general answer to be given to these questions embraces the particular reply to the inquiry by which they were suggested, respecting the fables of the Protevangelion and of the Books of the Infancy. Throughout the history of mankind, we find, as regards both



facts and doctrines, the broadest exhibitions of credulity, which, if the delusion have passed away, or if we are out of the sphere of its influence, we can hardly help regarding as monstrous and unnatural, till we recollect how prevalent they have been, and consequently how consistent with our common nature. There are other avenues, more trodden than the narrow way of reason, by which opinions enter the mind. What impresses the imagination, affects the feelings, and is blended with habitual associations, is received by the generality as true. Fables however absurd, conceptions however irrational, even unmeaning forms of words, which have been early presented to the mind, and with which it has been long conversant, make as vivid an impression upon it as realities, and assume their character. No opinions inhere more strongly than those about which the reason is not exercised; for they are unassailable by argument. It would be well to have different words to distinguish between the two different states of mind, in the one of which we receive conceptions as true without reasoning, while in the other our assent is given through an exercise of judgment. The term *to credit* is now used in one of its significations merely as synonymous with the term

to believe. We might confine the use of the former term to denoting the first kind of assent, assent without the exercise of the understanding, and employ the latter only to signify a faith that relies on reason. Using the words in these senses, we might say that the mass of errors which have been *credited* bears a vast disproportion to the amount of truths which have been *believed*. Nor shall we find it hard to conceive, nor regard it as a very extraordinary fact, that the fables respecting the mother of our Lord and our Lord himself have been *credited*, as well as the doctrine of transubstantiation. Undoubtedly the world has grown wiser; or rather, a small portion of the world has grown wiser; and we may hope that the light will become less troubled, steadier, and brighter, and spread itself more widely. *Aliud ex alio clarescet. Res accendent lumina rebus.*

FROM what has appeared in this Chapter, it is evident that the Gnostics did not oppose to the four Gospels any other history of Christ's ministry; or, to state the conclusion in more general terms, it is evident, that, during the first three centuries, no history of Christ's ministry at variance with the four Gospels was

in existence. The history of his ministry, such as it is contained in them, or in some one of them, served as a common basis for the opinions of all Christians, both catholic and heretical.

If the Gospel of the Hebrews, in its uncorrupted state, was, as we have seen reason to believe, the Gospel of Matthew, then there is no probability that any work besides those of the Evangelists, professing to be an original history of our Lord's ministry, was ever in circulation after the appearance of the first three Gospels, — somewhere, probably, about the year 65.* Luke mentions imperfect accounts which preceded his own. But, after the appearance of the first three Gospels, though the copies of such accounts might not be destroyed, they would cease to be multiplied and circulated. We accordingly find no trace of their existence subsequent to the notice of them by Luke.

It may seem again as if nothing further were to be said. But, in order to exhaust the general subject we are considering, a few more remarks remain to be made concerning some supposed gospels, formerly mentioned, which

* See Vol. I. pp. clxxviii, clxxix.

Eichhorn maintains to have been in common use during the second century previously to the use of the catholic Gospels, or even to the existence of the latter in their present state.* I have already had occasion to take notice of all the titles which he enumerates except two. These two, to which we will now attend, are "gospels used by Tatian in composing his Diatessaron" and "The Gospel of Cerinthus." †

TATIAN, the disciple of Justin Martyr, and the contemporary of Irenæus, became an ascetic, and a Gnostic of the Valentinian school. Respecting his Diatessaron, Theodoret, as we have formerly remarked, ‡ speaks of his having found two hundred copies of it among the Christians of his diocese, which he removed, and supplied their place by copies of the Gospels. He says, — "Tatian put together what is called 'The Gospel out of the Four'" (that is, a gospel composed out of the four Gospels, a Diatessaron), "cutting away the genealogies, and all else which shows that the Lord was

* See Vol. I. pp. 98 – 100. Comp. p. 9, seqq.

† "Cerinth's Evangelium." Eichhorn's *Einleit. in das N. T.*, I. 107.

‡ See Vol. I. p. 53.

born of the race of David according to the flesh. And this book is used, not only by those of his sect, but by those who adhere to the doctrines of the Apostles; they not knowing the fraud in its composition, but using it, in their simplicity, as a compendious book.”* It is evident that Theodoret, with the book before his eyes, regarded it as a history of Christ compiled from the four Gospels; nor does he object any thing to it but the omissions which he specifies. Eusebius gives the same account of the composition of the book from the four Gospels; remarking in connection, that the Encratites, of which sect, he says, Tatian was the founder, used the Gospels.† But, in opposition to all testimony and probability, it was fancied by Eichhorn that Tatian did not use our present four Gospels, but four others very like them; ‡ — so like them, it appears, that they were mistaken for them. There is not a sufficient show of argument in support of this conjecture to admit of any particular confutation. It may be worth while to discuss it, when the supposition can be rendered plau-

* Heret. Fab. Lib. I. n. 20. Opp. IV. 208.

† Hist. Eccles. Lib. IV. c. 29.

‡ Einleit. in das N. T., I. 110 – 113.

sible, that, in the time of Irenæus, simultaneously with our four Gospels, four other gospels existed very like them, but not the same.*

The Diatessaron of Tatian, then, is one among the abundant proofs of the use which the theosophic Gnostics made of the four Gos-

* "Tatian's Gospel," says Eichhorn, "was called by many the Gospel of the Hebrews"; and he asks, — "Whence could this name have arisen, except from the circumstance that that gospel served for its basis?" The only authority for his assertion is a passage of Epiphanius.

Epiphanius, as his text now stands, says (Hæres. XLVI. § 1. Opp. I. 391), — "From Tatian those who are called Encratites derive their origin, partaking of the same venom; and it is said that 'The Gospel out of the Four,' which some call 'The Gospel according to the Hebrews,' was made by him." But there can be no doubt that the Diatessaron of Tatian and the Gospel of the Hebrews were very different books; and the supposition, that the Hebrew Gospel of the Jewish Christians was written in Greek by a Gnostic toward the close of the second century, is too gross an absurdity for any one to have entertained. Nor is there the least probability that the title of "The Gospel according to the Hebrews" was ever common to the book to which it properly belonged and to Tatian's Diatessaron. If the text of Epiphanius be correct, his assertion can only be reckoned as one among his numberless blunders. But it seems most probable that his text is corrupt; and that, instead of *κατὰ Ἑβραίων*, "according to the Hebrews," we should read *κατὰ Ἐγκρατῆτας*, "according to the Encratites." This will accord with his speaking of Tatian's Diatessaron in immediate connection with his mention of the Encratites as deriving their origin from him. They, of course, were likely to make particular use of his Diatessaron; and this therefore might naturally be called by some "The Gospel according to the Encratites."

pels, and of the authority which they ascribed to them.

WE proceed to the supposed gospel of Cerinthus. Eichhorn quotes concerning this two passages from Epiphanius, who is his sole authority.

That writer, in his account of the Cerinthians, affirms that they "used the Gospel of Matthew, not complete, however, but in part only"; * and, in his account of the Ebionites, he says that Cerinthus used the same Gospel of Matthew with the Ebionites, except that he retained the genealogy for the purpose of proving from it that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary.†

Regarding Epiphanius as a trustworthy writer, and as being alone a sufficient representative of Christian antiquity, Eichhorn asserts that "*it is undeniable that Christian antiquity ascribed to Cerinthus the use of Matthew's Gospel, but with a shorter text*"; ‡ and he

* Hæres. XXVIII. § 5. p. 113.

† Hæres. XXX. § 14. p. 138.

‡ Einleit. in das N. T., I. 110. — It may be worth while here to take notice of what we might call an extraordinary oversight of Eichhorn, if such oversights did not often occur in the works of the modern theologians of Germany. Cerinthus is represented, by all the ancient writers who pretend to give an account

infers that the Gospel of Cerinthus was an earlier gospel than that of Matthew, that is to say, the Gospel which we now call Matthew's in a yet imperfect state.*

It is needless to inquire by what process this might be inferred from the words of Epiphanius, supposing him to be a writer of good authority. As we have formerly seen,† he is entitled to no credit in his account of the Cerinthians. He has manufactured a sect, to which, ascribing the doctrines of the Ebionites, he has likewise ascribed the use of the Gospel of the Ebionites.

But there is another passage of Epiphanius,

of him, as teaching that Jesus was the son of Joseph and Mary. But Eichhorn, after quoting his authority, Epiphanius, to this effect, proceeds, a few lines after (p. 108), to observe, that, as the gospel of Cerinthus had the genealogy of Jesus, so "it probably had also the whole *evangelium infantie* (gospel of the infancy) which is now contained in the first two chapters of Matthew." That is to say, Eichhorn supposes, that, though Cerinthus rejected the belief of the miraculous conception of our Lord, he received the account of it as authentic.

It is by conjectures which have more or less of a like character, and by critics equally inconsiderate, that the genuineness and authenticity of the Gospels have been assailed in modern times in Germany. Among those critics I know of none who is to be ranked higher than Eichhorn for theological knowledge, clearness of mind, and power of reasoning.

* Einleit. in das N. T., I. 109.

† Vol. II. pp. 76 - 78.

which Eichhorn has omitted to notice. It is in his account of the Alogi. Luke, he says, in the first words of his Gospel, "Since many have undertaken," that is, to write gospels, "points to some undertakers, as Cerinthus, Merinthus, and others."* He had before told us that Cerinthus and his followers used the Gospel of Matthew, with some omissions. He here tells us that Cerinthus wrote a gospel before Luke wrote his. Following him, therefore, as a well-informed and credible writer, and putting his different accounts together, we must conclude that Cerinthus was the original composer of Matthew's Gospel. Reasoning after a fashion with which every one acquainted with modern German theology must be familiar, we might go on to infer, as highly probable, that Merinthus was the author of the Gospel of Mark. But here we should be met by a difficulty, arising from what Epiphanius elsewhere says, that he did not know whether Cerinthus and Merinthus were different persons, or only different names of the same person.† But the existence of the very early gospel of Merinthus, which, I believe,

* Hæres. LI. § 7. p. 428.

† Hæres. XXVIII. § 8. p. 115.

no one has yet undertaken to patronize, rests on as good ground as that of the gospel of Cerinthus.

IN pursuing the inquiry concerning the supposed existence of Gnostic gospels, we have enabled ourselves to form a correct judgment of the character and importance of all those books which have been called apocryphal gospels, and of their bearing on the genuineness and authenticity of those four books which in ancient times were universally recognized as the original histories of Christ's ministry, given by his immediate followers, or those who derived their knowledge from them. On the subject of apocryphal gospels there have been vague and incorrect notions, that have continued, in one form or other, down to our time, among those who have been disposed to invalidate the authority of the four Gospels. They cannot, perhaps, be more clearly or more briefly explained than in the words of the Jew Orobio, in his celebrated controversy with Limborch respecting the truth of Christianity. "There were," he says, "besides the four Gospels many others, some of which are referred

to by Jerome * and other fathers, which were the foundation of different heresies. Such were the gospel to the Egyptians, that to the Hebrews, that of Thomas, that of Bartholomew,† that of the Twelve Apostles,‡ that of Basilides, that of Harpocras,§ and others that it would be superfluous to mention; every one of which had its adherents, and gave occasion to dispute. All these gospels, conflicting with one another in regard to the truth of the history, were in the course of time and by the authority of councils rejected; the four only being admitted in Europe, as corresponding best with each other.”|| On the ground of

* The imperfect and erroneous view of the subject taken by Orobio is sufficiently evident from this reference to Jerome. Books which could have come into competition with the four Gospels must have been very conspicuous books long before the time of Jerome.

† This title is first mentioned by Jerome in his Proem to Matthew's Gospel. The existence of any book answering to it is doubtful.

‡ This was another title for the Gospel of the Hebrews. See before, pp. 265, 266, note.

§ By Harpocras must, it would seem, be meant Carpocrates, and Orobio probably had in mind an indistinct recollection of the story of Epiphanius (Hæres. XXX. § 14. p. 138), that Carpocrates used the Gospel of Matthew, corrupted, in common with the Ebionites. (See Vol. I. p. lii. note). — Except this title, and that of “The Gospel of Bartholomew,” the others enumerated by Orobio have been already remarked upon.

|| The passage is quoted by Fabricius, I. 146.

such statements it has been argued, in effect, that there were originally many various accounts of Christ's ministry, differing much from one another, so that the truth was altogether unsettled, and that our four Gospels, which had no particular claim to credit, obtained general currency, to the exclusion of other works of the same kind, in consequence only of their finding favor with the prevalent party among Christians, and hence being sanctioned by the decrees of councils. Respecting this supposition, it is here unnecessary to recur to that evidence for the universal reception of the four Gospels by the great body of Christians which shows it to be altogether untenable. In the present Chapter, we have examined, or adverted to, every book, real or supposed, passing under the name of a gospel, the title of which is mentioned by any writer before Epiphanius. Among them are the Gospel of the Hebrews and the Gospel of Marcion. The existence of neither of these books can weaken the proof of the authority and general reception of the four Gospels. But it would be idle to suppose that any other of those which have been mentioned was brought into competition with the four Gospels as a different history of Christ's ministry ; and still more idle

to suppose this of any book, the very title of which is not mentioned till after the middle of the fourth century.*

THE main purpose of our inquiry respecting the Gnostics has been to determine whether they afford evidence for the genuineness of the Gospels. That they do afford such evidence has abundantly appeared. But something remains to be said. In the next Chapter we

* A degree of confusion and misapprehension respecting the subject of apocryphal gospels may have been produced by the fact, that Fabricius gives an account of such gospels under fifty titles, which, as the same book sometimes passed under two or more different titles, he supposes may represent about forty books (I. 335*, note). But in making this collection he has taken a very wide range. He has included writings which have no claim to the title of "gospel," either in the ancient or modern sense of the word; and he has brought his catalogue down to the year 1600, mentioning a History of Christ in Persian, published that year by the missionary Jerome Xavier, for the benefit of his converts. Many of the titles collected by him rest on no good authority. Some evidently had their origin in ignorance and misapprehension. With the exception of those which have been remarked upon, they are to be found only in writers from Epiphanius downward. Their alphabetical arrangement, however, tends, at first view, to give the impression, that one deserves as much attention as another. But, of the works mentioned by Fabricius, all that can with any reason be supposed to have been extant before the middle of the third century have been taken notice of in this Chapter.

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shall conclude with bringing into one view the facts already adduced, in connection with others not yet adverted to, and attending to the relations and bearings of the whole.



CHAPTER XIII.

CONCLUDING STATEMENT OF THE EVIDENCE FOR THE GENUINENESS OF THE GOSPELS AFFORDED BY THE Gnostics.

THE facts that have been brought forward show in what manner the Gospels were regarded by the Gnostics. It has appeared that the theosophic Gnostics recognized the authority of the four Gospels in common with the catholic Christians, while the Gospel used by the Marcionites was essentially the same with the Gospel of Luke. But we will now review those facts in connection with some others which have not yet been stated, and consider more particularly what inferences may be drawn from the whole. In pursuing the subject, we will first confine our attention to the Marcionites.

AN unjustifiable application of a principle common to all the Gnostics * led the Marcionites to reject certain passages from the text of Luke, and to decline any appeal to the au-

* See before, p. 206, seqq.

thority of the three remaining Gospels. But the very principle on which they proceeded, that the Apostles and their followers were under the influence of Jewish prejudices, implies that they recognized the genuineness of the passages, and of the Gospels, which they rejected. It may be further remarked, that their having recourse to the mutilation of Luke's Gospel shows that no other history of Christ's ministry existed more favorable to their doctrines; — that, in the first half of the second century, when Marcion lived, there was no Gnostic gospel in being, to which he could appeal.

The fact, that Marcion's gospel was founded on that of Luke, proves the existence and authority of Luke's Gospel at the time when Marcion lived. We may, therefore, recur to the reasoning which has before been used, to show that the existence and authority of any one of the four Gospels at a particular period implies the contemporaneous existence and authority of the other three.* In proving their genuineness, if that reasoning be correct, they may be regarded as virtually one book. Had any other of the Gospels not existed together with that of Luke, at the commencement of

* See Vol. I. pp. 183 – 190.

the second century, or had it not then been regarded as of authority, it never could afterward have attained to the high estimation in which Luke's Gospel was held.

WE will next attend to the broad distinction that was made between the Marcionites and the theosophic Gnostics in consequence of the fact, that the Marcionites admitted as of authority among the Gospels only their mutilated copy of Luke. On this ground Irenæus, as we have seen,* declined controverting their opinions in connection with those of the other Gnostics; and Tertullian, in confuting them, expressly limited himself to the use of their own gospel. The distinction was, that the Marcionites recognized only the authority of their own gospel; while the other Gnostics, as is thus testified by their opponents, appealed equally with the catholic Christians to the authority of all the four Gospels.

This is the concession of their opponents. But we will go on, and see what further evidence of the fact exists.

I have repeatedly had occasion to refer to the letter of Ptolemy, the Valentinian, to Flora,

* Vol. II. pp. 94, 95.

in which he gives an account of his doctrines respecting the Supreme Being and the Creator. In this letter he says, that he shall prove what he asserts "by the words of the Saviour, which only are an infallible guide to the apprehension of the truth"; and he accordingly confirms his positions throughout by quotations from the Gospels. In the conclusion of the letter, he introduces the mention of those apostolic traditions to which the Gnostics appealed, but speaks of them only as an additional and subordinate means of knowledge. He promises to give further explanations founded "on the doctrine of the Apostles received by tradition; every thing at the same time being confirmed by the teaching of the Saviour, which must be taken as the standard." Heracleon, another Valentinian, who lived in the second century, and was highly esteemed, as we are told, by those of his own sect, wrote a commentary on the Gospel of John, which is often quoted by Origen. The views of the Basilidians respecting the Gospels may be inferred from the fact, that Basilides himself wrote a commentary on the Gospels.* Tatian, who was a Gnostic, composed, as we have

* See before, pp. 237-239.

seen, a Harmony of the Gospels.* And in the *Doctrina Orientalis*, the Gnostic writer appeals to the Gospels to countenance his opinions as freely as a catholic Christian might have done, and appeals to no other history of Christ. It is throughout to be kept in mind, that the theosophic Gnostics, while they thus used the Gospels, used no other books of the same class as of like authority; that they did not, any more than the catholic Christians, bring any other history of Christ's ministry into competition with them.

IN treating of the doctrines of the theosophic Gnostics I have incidentally given examples of the use made by them of passages of the Gospels. Many more might be adduced. But a particular enumeration of passages to which they appealed is unnecessary, since their use of the Gospels is fully acknowledged by their catholic opponents.

Irenæus begins his work by charging them with deceiving men by "corrupting the oracles of the Lord, being evil interpreters of what has been well spoken."† He often remarks on their ingenuity in perverting the Scriptures. Speaking particularly of the Valentinians, he says, —

* See before, pp. 292–295.

† Lib. I. Prefat. § 1. p. 2.

“You see the method they use to deceive themselves, wresting the Scriptures and endeavouring to find support in them for their fictions.” * He gives connectedly many passages from the Gospels, which they applied to the proof of their doctrines, and afterwards confutes their interpretations.† He speaks of them as making use of every part of the Gospel of John.‡ I have already quoted a passage in which he says that those heretics, in putting together detached passages of Scripture, resemble one who should separate the stones of a mosaic representing a king, and employ them to make the figure of a fox or a dog; § and another in which he compares their abundant use of Scripture language to the labor of one stringing together verses of Homer to form a cento. || “There is such assurance,” he says, “concerning the Gospels, that the heretics themselves bear testimony to them, and every one of them endeavours to prove his doctrine from them. . . . As, then, those who oppose us bear testimony in our favor, and use these Gospels, it follows that what we have shown that the Gospels teach is established and true.” ¶

* Lib. I. c. 9. § 1. p. 43. † Lib. I. capp. 8, 9. pp. 35–47.

‡ Lib. III. c. 11. § 7. p. 190. § Lib. I. c. 8. § 1. p. 36.

|| Lib. I. c. 9. § 4. pp. 45, 46. Tertullian uses the same comparison, *De Præscript. Hæretic.* c. 39. p. 216.

¶ Lib. III. c. 11. § 7. pp. 189, 190.

"There could not be heresies," says Tertulian, "if the Scriptures were incapable of being misinterpreted." * "They could not venture to show themselves without some pretence from the Scriptures." † "The heretics plead their cause from the Scriptures, and draw their arguments from the Scriptures. Whence, indeed, could they draw their arguments concerning the subjects of faith, except from the books of the faith ? " ‡

It appears, then, that the theosophic Gnostics abundantly appealed to the Scriptures, and particularly to the Gospels, in support of their opinions. The passages I have quoted, and others of a similar character, are not to be considered as mere common testimony to this fact. They are the admissions of their opponents. So far as there was any ground for it, the catholic Christians were eager to charge the Gnostics with mutilating, rejecting, and undervaluing the writings of the New Testament. In the case of the Marcionites, this accusation was strongly urged. But, as respects the theosophic Gnostics, we have the testimony of the earliest and most elaborate writers against them,

* De Resurrectione Carnis, c. 40. p. 349.

† Ibid. c. 63. p. 365.

‡ De Præscript. Hæret. c. 14. p. 207.

of Irenæus and Tertullian, that they made use of the Gospels, and other writings of the New Testament, and constantly appealed to them for proof of their doctrines, as freely as the catholic Christians.

The Marcionites made similar use of those portions of the New Testament the authority of which they admitted. This is abundantly apparent from Tertullian's whole controversy with them; and might be inferred simply from the fact that they did acknowledge the authority of those portions which they retained.

BUT the evidence which has been brought forward of the facts just stated, however conclusive, is not, perhaps, the most striking that may be adduced. There is a remarkable work of Tertullian, entitled "*De Præscriptione Hæreticorum*." The word *præscriptio*, used in this title, was a forensic term, denoting an exception taken by a defendant to the plaintiff's right to maintain an action. The title of Tertullian's work might be rendered "On the Plea in Bar against the Heretics." Its purpose is to show that the heretics should not be allowed to argue their cause from the Scriptures. The position which he maintains is, — That the history of the catholic doctrine and of the doctrines of the

heretics alone determines the former to be true and the latter false, without further inquiry. His argument proceeds as follows.

Christ, whoever he was, of whatever God he was the son, whatever was the substance of his divine and of his human nature, whatever faith he taught, whatever rewards he promised, declared while on earth what he was, what he had been, the will of his Father, and the duty of man, either publicly to the people, or apart to his disciples. He sent forth his Apostles, who had been chosen by him for this purpose, to preach to the world the same doctrine which he had taught. They founded churches in every city where they went, from which other churches had been and were still derived. These all traced back their origin to the Apostles, and formed one great Apostolic church, held together in brotherhood by the reception of the same religion handed down to all.

But if Christ gave authority to his Apostles to preach his religion, no other expositors of it are to be listened to. What they preached is what he revealed; and in order to ascertain what they preached, we must recur to the churches which they founded, and instructed, orally and by their epistles. Whatever doctrine is held by those churches is true, as derived

from the Apostles, and through them from Christ, and through Christ from God. Every other doctrine is false. But we, says Tertullian, hold communion with the Apostolic churches, there is no difference of belief between us and them; and this is the proof of the truth of our doctrines.*

The argument stated in its most concise form, it will be perceived, is this: That it was matter of history that the catholic churches had, from the days of the Apostles, held the same doctrines as they did in the time of Tertullian; and that these doctrines, therefore, were the original doctrines of the religion derived through the Apostles from Christ. It was equally a matter of history, he continues, that the founders of the principal heretical sects, Valentinus and Marcion, for instance, had lived after the times of the Apostles, and had introduced new doctrines not before held by the churches. If their doctrines were true, the churches had before been in error from the beginning. "Thousands of thousands had been baptized into a false religion." "Let them show me," says Tertullian, "by what authority they have come forward. . . . Let them prove themselves to be new Apostles; let them affirm that Christ has again

* Capp. 20, 21. pp. 208, 209.

descended, has again taught, has again been crucified, has again died, and has risen again. It was thus that he formed his Apostles, giving them, moreover, the power of working the same miracles which he did. I wish them to produce their miracles." *

The main scope of the reasoning of Tertullian is apparent. It is, he maintains, a well-known historical fact, that the catholic doctrine, as opposed to that of the Gnostics, has been held from the beginning by the churches which the Apostles founded, and by all other churches in communion with them. This fact precludes the necessity of any further argument with those heretics. They have no claim to be heard in appealing to the Scriptures in support of their opinions.

Tertullian remarks at length upon the various objections which were made to his argument by different individuals, or by the same at different times. All of them, it may be observed, are founded on passages of the New Testament. With the exception of the last to be here mentioned, they have already been spoken of. The Gnostics sometimes said that the Apostles did not know all things;† sometimes, that the

* Capp. 29, 30. pp. 212, 213.

† See before, pp. 206-208.

Apostles had a public and a private doctrine, and did not communicate all truths openly to all ;* and, finally, they contended that the catholic churches, from the earliest times, had fallen into error through not understanding what the Apostles taught.

It is not necessary to dwell on the answers of Tertullian to these objections. His main argument, considering the early period when it was adduced, and its application as against the doctrines of the Gnostics, is, evidently, conclusive. I have given this brief account of it for the purpose of introducing the reason which he assigns for urging it. This reason is, that in the controversy between the catholic Christians and the Gnostics, when the Gnostics were allowed to appeal to the Scriptures in proof of their doctrines, they argued so plausibly as to leave the victory uncertain ; to make converts of some, and to instil doubts into others.

“We come then,” he says, “to the subject proposed.” “Our opponents put forward the Scriptures, and their boldness has an immediate effect upon some. In the first encounter, they fatigue the strong, they take captive the weak, and dismiss others with doubts. Here, then, I meet them at the onset ; they are not to be admitted to argue from the Scriptures.”†

* See before, pp. 199 – 206.

† Cap. 15. p. 207.

"Will he for the sake of whose doubts you engage in an argument from the Scriptures be inclined in consequence more to the truth or to heresy? When he sees that you make no advance, that, the other party maintaining his ground, you both equally deny and defend, he will surely go away from this conflict more uncertain than before, and ignorant on which side the heresy lies." *

"The appeal, therefore, is not to be made to the Scriptures, nor is the decision of the controversy to be rested on them; for they will afford no victory, or an uncertain one, or one no better than uncertain. Even though the mutual appeal to Scripture should not leave each party on an equality,† yet the order of things demands that that consideration should be first brought forward which is the sole subject of the present argument,—To whom does the faith [the religion] itself belong? Whose are the Scriptures? From whom, and through whom, and when, and to whom, was the instruction delivered, by which men are made Christians? For, wherever it may appear that the true Christian instruction and faith are to be found,

* Cap. 18. p. 208.

† I adopt the reading, "ut utramque partem parem sisteret."

there will be the true Scriptures, and their true exposition, and all true Christian traditions.” *

THUS it appears, that, whatever difficulties the theosophic Gnostics found in reconciling their doctrines with the New Testament, they recognized the necessity of doing so ; that they were ready to meet their opponents on this ground ; that they furnished plausible explanations of those difficulties, and drew from the New Testament plausible arguments in their own favor. But this is but a partial statement. The theosophic Gnostics appealed to the Gospels as freely and as confidently as did the catholic Christians ; contending, that they alone had the true key to their meaning, and that other Christians, not being spiritual, could not comprehend their hidden and higher senses. They believed, indeed, that the Apostles and Evangelists were not infallible ; that they were liable to human errors, and that they were affected by prejudices and false opinions, common to their countrymen, which had been implanted in their minds in childhood, had grown with their growth, and had not been wholly eradicated. But the theosophic Gnostics, who allegorized

* Cap. 19. p. 308.

and spiritualized the words of the Gospels, had not the same occasion to misapply this principle as the Marcionites, who were not allegorists. The Marcionites regarded the Gospels as colored throughout by the Jewish prejudices of their writers. But, by taking the work of him whom they considered as the most enlightened of the Evangelists, St. Luke, and rejecting from it some errors, they thought themselves able to obtain a history altogether correct; and this was the basis of their system.

Still, had any seemingly credible history of Christ's ministry existed, more favorable to the opinions of the Gnostics than the four Gospels, there can be no doubt that they would have used that history in preference. The manner, therefore, in which they appealed to the four Gospels, or to the history of Christ as contained in the Gospel of Luke, without bringing any Gnostic history into competition with them, is proof that no such history existed. All Christians, the catholics, the theosophic Gnostics, the Marcionites, and, as we have before seen, the Hebrew Christians, were equally ignorant of any history of Christ's ministry different from that given by the Evangelists. No party relied on any other; no party had any other to produce.

BUT it has been suggested, or implied, that the early founders of the Gnostic sects drew their systems from their philosophy, and connected them only with some general belief that the coming of Christ was a manifestation of the Supreme God for the purpose of delivering men from moral evil and its consequences; and that it was merely by way of reasoning *ad hominem* with the catholic Christians, that the Gnostics made use of the Gospels.* Let us try the probability of this supposition by applying it to a particular case, that of the Valentinians.

We have seen that the Valentinians so fully, and in such various ways, professed their belief in the truth of the Gospels, that their opponents did not accuse them of denying it; though this charge would unquestionably have been brought against them, had there been a foundation for it. But they made use of the Gospels, it may be said, not in good faith; they quoted them only "to satisfy those who demanded proofs from Scripture";† or undertook to explain them by way of answering the objections of those who regarded the Gospels as of authority. The statements already made show that these

* See, for example, Walch's *Historie der Ketzereien*, I. 374. Matter, *Histoire du Gnosticisme*, II. 172, 190.

† Walch, *ubi supra*.

suppositions have no probability to recommend them; but let us examine a little farther. According to this hypothesis, the Valentinians did not believe the authenticity and genuineness of the Gospels; they did not sincerely recognize their authority; they did not believe them to favor their own opinions; and, consequently, they did not believe them to teach what they thought true Christianity. At the same time, it is evident that these books were principally relied on by their opponents as a storehouse of arguments against them. We have, indeed, no reason to doubt that there was a foundation for the strong language which has been quoted from Tertullian, respecting their skilful and successful use of the Scriptures. We may believe that the Gnostics sometimes made converts from among the catholic Christians, and showed much talent, after the fashion of their times, in reconciling their doctrines with the New Testament, and in persuading themselves and others that they were indicated in the parables or supported by the declarations of Christ, as recorded in the Gospels. But, after all, it is evident that the Gospels do not teach the Gnostic doctrines, but do teach what is irreconcilable with those doctrines. It is equally certain that this fact was recognized by a great majority of early

believers (for the catholic Christians far outnumbered the Gnostics), and even by a very large and respectable portion of the Gnostics themselves, the Marcionites, as appears from the expedient to which they had recourse, of rejecting the use of three of the Gospels, and mutilating that which they retained. Would the Valentinians, then, have professed to regard those books as authentic, had there been good reasons for questioning their authenticity? Is it credible that they would, with such a consistent show of conviction as to deceive and silence their opponents, have professed their belief in the truth of the Gospels, had they not believed them true? So far from it, they would at once have seized on the triumph, or at least the advantage, which was evidently in their power, could the genuineness and authority of the books relied on by their opponents have been fairly denied or fairly questioned. The course to be pursued would have been clear; and neither an honest man, nor a controvertist of common ability, could have neglected to take it. The Valentinians, and the other theosophic Gnostics, would not have persisted in dishonestly affirming or implying their belief of the authenticity of books which they did not believe to be authentic, and which furnished their opponents

with arguments against their doctrines, conclusive in themselves, and by most regarded as conclusive.

Let us view the subject under another aspect. The Gospels were either known to Valentinus himself, or they were not. If they were known to him, they were either regarded by him as genuine and authentic, or they were not. He lived at so early an age, in the first half of the second century, that no question could have existed in his time, whether they were entitled to that character. The fact must have been known, either that they were, or that they were not, entitled to it. If he regarded them as genuine and authentic, there can be no doubt that they were so regarded by his followers, and by the great body of contemporary Christians; and our inquiry is at an end. Let us suppose, then, either that they were not known to him, that they were not in existence,—or that, being known to him, they were rejected by him as unworthy of credit. In either case, he built his system on other foundations, and supported it by other arguments, than what those books might afford. In either case, it is evident that his followers would never have admitted or implied the truth of the Gospels. They would never have consented to receive, as genuine and authentic,

books not known to their master, or which he had rejected, — books which they themselves must have believed to be the fabrications of opponents who had excluded him and them from their community, and which furnished those opponents with the strongest arguments against what they regarded as true Christianity. They would not have exposed themselves to such expostulations as those of Tertullian: — “If they are heretics, they are not Christians, not deriving their doctrine from Christ. . . . Not being Christians, they have no property in the books of Christians. It may justly be said to them, Who are you? When and whence did you come? What are you, who do not belong to me, doing on my premises? By what right, Marcion, do you cut down my woods? By what license, Valentinus, do you divert the water of my springs? By what authority, Apelles, are you removing my landmarks? How is it, that you others are sowing and pasturing here at your pleasure? It is my possession; I have possessed it of old; I trace back my title to its original source; I am heir of the Apostles.”* To such language it would have required neither an acute nor an angry controvertist to give the

* De Præscript. Hæretic. c. 37. p. 215.

answer, that this disputed possession was not worth claiming, could such an answer have been given with truth.

In examining (in the Second Part of this work) the direct historical evidence of the genuineness of the Gospels, we have seen that it does not mainly consist, as in the case of other books, of assertions and implications of individual writers concerning their authorship. It rests on the fact, that they were universally received, as the works of those to whom they are ascribed, by the great body of catholic Christians, at so early a period that no mistake on the subject could have been committed; and on another consideration of equal weight, that this general reception of the Gospels as genuine, wherever Christianity had been preached, is a phenomenon which can be accounted for only on the supposition of their genuineness.

But, in turning from the catholic Christians to the Gnostics, it might not be unreasonable to apprehend, considering the opposition in which the two parties stood to each other, that something would appear to cloud the testimony of the former, and, perhaps, to shake our confidence in it as conclusive. Certainly, had there been, during the first ages of Christianity, any

doubt concerning the genuineness of the Gospels, we should have learned it from the Gnostics. But, so far from any doubt being suggested by the examination which we have gone through, we find the Gnostics strongly confirming the testimony of their catholic opponents. Valentinus and Basilides carry us back to the earlier part of the second century;* and they, in common with the catholic Christians, received the Gospels as the authentic histories of the ministry of Christ. About the same period, Marcion affords his evidence to the general reception of one of the Gospels, and, consequently, as we have seen, proof of the reception of the other three.† On the Gospels, or, to include the case of the Marcionites and the Hebrew Christians, on a history of Christ, such as is found in one of the Gospels, every form of Christian faith rested as its foundation. No history presenting a different view of his ministry was in existence.

HERE, then, we conclude our statement of the historical evidence, both direct and subsidiary, of the Genuineness of the Gospels. The catholic Christians bear testimony to their hav-

* See Vol. II. pp. 84 - 87.

† See before, pp. 304, 305.

ing been written by the particular individuals to whom they are ascribed. The Gnostics confirm this testimony by the proofs which they afford of their general reception and authority.

WE have pursued this investigation carefully and at length, as if there was some intrinsic improbability in the proposition, that the Gospels were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, — some presumption against it, such as to require a patient removal of difficulties, and an accumulation of strong evidence, to establish its truth. But, on the contrary, it is apparent that the Gospels were written by early believers in our Lord; there is not a show of evidence that they were written by any other believers than those to whom they have been ascribed; and nothing is more probable than that some of his immediate disciples, or of their intimate companions, should have left us such narratives of his life.

The founder of our religion, whether one believe or not that he was authorized by God to speak in his name, was unquestionably the most wonderful individual who ever appeared on earth. A Jew, a Galilæan, in humble life, poor, without literary culture, without worldly power or influence; teaching but for a short

time (probably not more than two years) ; wandering about the shores of the lake of Galilee and of the Jordan ; scarcely entering Jerusalem but to be driven away by persecution, till at last he went thither to perish under it ; collecting during his lifetime only a small body of illiterate, and often wavering, followers ; addressing men whose incapacity, prejudices, or hatred continually led them to mistake or to pervert his meaning ; surrounded, and apparently overpowered, by his unbelieving countrymen, who regarded him as a blasphemer and caused him to suffer the death of the most unpitied of malefactors, — this person has wrought an effect, to which there is nothing parallel, on the opinions and on the condition of the most enlightened portion of our race. The moral civilization of the world, the noblest conceptions which men have entertained of religion, of their nature and of their duties, are to be traced back directly to him. They come to us, not from the groves of the Academy, not from the walks by the Ilissus which Aristotle frequented, nor from the Painted Portico of Athens where Zeno taught ; but from the mountain on which Jesus delivered his first recorded discourse ; from the synagogue and the streets of the small town of Capernaum, of which not a ruin remains to fix its site ;

from fishing-boats on the lake of Galilee ; from the less inhabited tracts — the deserts, as they have been called — of Palestine ; from the courts of the Jewish temple, where he who spoke was confronting men plotting his destruction ; from the cross of one expiring in agony amid the savage triumph of his enemies. After witnessing such a death, his disciples lost all their doubts. They affirmed their master to be the Saviour of the World, the Son of God. They devoted themselves to labor and suffer, and, if need were, to die, in making him known to men. What they strove to impress upon the minds of others was what, as they asserted, he had done and taught. They “knew nothing but Jesus Christ and him crucified.” It was the history, real or pretended, of his ministry on earth, which was the basis of all their teaching, — the essential instruction to be first communicated to all who were summoned to put their trust in him, — to take up their cross, and follow him in the new path which he had opened from earth to heaven. Now there can be no supposition more irrational, than that the history of Christ, which was thus promulgated by all his first disciples, and received by all their first converts, was lost before the beginning of the second century, and another history substituted in its place. But if the Gos-

pels contain the history of Christ as it was promulgated by his Apostles, there can be no ground for doubting that they were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, by Apostles and companions of Apostles.

To all the weight of evidence that the Gospels were written by the authors to whom they have been ascribed, what other account of their origin has been or may be opposed? The genuineness of the Gospel of John has been directly impugned by some modern German theologians. Their hypotheses are, necessarily, only developments of one essential proposition, that this Gospel is a spurious work, fraudulently ascribed to the Apostle by its original writer, or by some other individual or individuals. There can be no direct evidence of the truth of this supposition; and with it another must be connected, namely, that this imagined fraud was so successful as to impose on all Christians, catholic and heretical, from the beginning of the second century. But, if this be a moral impossibility, then there is a moral certainty that the Gospel ascribed to John was the work of that Apostle. Yet this brief statement, decisive as it may be, gives but a very imperfect view of those facts and considerations, heretofore presented, which

show that any other supposition is altogether incredible.

In respect to the other three Gospels, the attacks on their genuineness and authenticity by many of the modern German theologians have been more elaborate. But, if their genuineness be denied, there are only two fundamental suppositions, one or the other of which must be made. One is of the same nature with that which has been advanced concerning St. John's Gospel. It may be asserted that each of them is a spurious work of some *one* unknown author. But this supposition has been generally felt to be too indefensible. Recourse has therefore been had to different hypotheses, which may all be resolved into one fundamental supposition,—that the first three Gospels are, respectively, aggregates of stories by different hands, brought together by different compilers. In the First Part of this work, we have examined this supposition under as plausible a form as any in which it has appeared; and, if the view there taken of the subject be correct, there is something like mathematical demonstration of its falsity. But so far as those hypotheses are connected, as they have been, with the supposition that the narratives contained in the first three Gospels are distorted and discolored by

tradition, there is a moral demonstration of their falsity. The character of Jesus Christ as exhibited in any one of the first three Gospels, or in all of them taken together, is equally consistent and wonderful. It is, at the same time, a character to which nothing in human history, before or after, presents a parallel or a resemblance. He appears as one acting under the miraculous conviction that he was the instrument of God, to assure men, on His authority, of their relations to Him and to eternity; and this conception of his character is fully sustained. In the midst of men who appear, as we should expect the Jews of that age to appear, ignorant, narrow-minded, dull in their perceptions, indocile, many of them hating him with all the hatred of bigotry; throughout trials of every sort; under external circumstances so humiliating that we shrink from the thought of them, he shows always the same unalterable elevation of character, requiring no human support. We feel that he was not to be degraded by any insult; and that no praise could have been addressed to him, had it come from the highest of men, which would not have been a strange impertinence. If our natural feelings have been unperturbed, we follow him, if not with the conviction, — that conviction has been

resisted, — but certainly with a sentiment, continually prompting us to say, "Truly, this was the Son of God." But it is folly to suppose that such a portraiture of character could have been the result of an aggregation of fabulous traditionary stories which had been moulded by different minds, Jewish or Gentile. The comparison is unworthy of the subject, but it would not be more absurd to imagine that the finest works of ancient plastic art, — the display of perfect physical beauty in the Apollo Belvidere, — had been produced by putting together the labors of different artists at different times, all working without a model, this making one part or member, and that another.

WE may enter on the inquiry respecting the genuineness of the Gospels merely as scholars and critics, without any previous opinion respecting their contents. To a thinking man, whatever may be his opinion, it must appear an object of great curiosity to determine the authorship of books so extraordinary, and which have had such vast influence. In treating the historical evidence for their genuineness, we deal with historical facts, and our reasoning is of a kind with which we are familiar, and which is fully within the cognizance of our

judgment. But if, from the preceding examination of this evidence, it appears that the Gospels are the works of those to whom they have been ascribed, then the argument we have pursued, and which we ought to pursue, merely as scholars and critics, or, I may better say, as intelligent men, capable of understanding the force of reasoning, leads to results of the deepest moment. Upon arriving at the end of our journey, on quitting the detail of history and criticism, through which it has lain, considerations of another class present themselves to view; we see rising before us objects the most solemn and sublime; we have been brought to the contemplation of all that is of permanent and essential interest to man. Let us examine the reasoning thoroughly as logicians; but if it will bear this examination, then the conclusion to which it leads is to be regarded with very different feelings from what may have been called forth during its process. If the Gospels were written by the authors to whom they are ascribed, two of them by individuals who were intimate companions of Jesus, eyewitnesses of his ministry, who knew the facts, whatever they were, of his public life, and the other two, by those who received their accounts immediately from such eyewitnesses; then the nar-

rative of his ministry contained in the Gospels is true. The Apostles could not have been deceived respecting the facts which they profess to relate. If Jesus Christ did not, by a series of miracles performed before crowds of spectators, by his doctrines, and by an exhibition of character altogether conformed to his claims, give full evidence of his being authorized to speak in the name of God, then the Gospels are not a collection of legends, the growth of tradition in an ignorant and marvel-loving age,—that supposition is excluded by the proof of their genuineness,—they are throughout a tissue of monstrous and inexplicable falsehoods. If the Gospels be genuine, there are but two conclusions which are possible. The narrative of the public life of Jesus contained in them is either essentially true, or it is essentially false; and if false, it is so thoroughly false, that we know nothing concerning his character and actions. His immediate followers have buried his history under a mass of prodigious fictions; and these fictions they propagated, in the face of his enemies and their own, among those whom they affirmed to have witnessed the pretended events which they related. The true history of Jesus Christ, of him who really has wrought such vast changes in the condition of

men, is unknown ; and instead of it, we have a fiction of inexpressible grandeur, the conception of some Jews of Galilee, fishermen, tax-gatherers, and others, who were shamelessly and recklessly destitute of veracity. — But we have brought the argument to an absurdity so repulsive, that it would be equally offensive and unprofitable to dwell on it longer.

It follows, then, that the history of Jesus contained in the Gospels is true. The essential facts of religion have been expressly made known to men on the authority of God. They are facts, glorious, solemn, overwhelming, but as real as the ordinary objects of every-day life ; certain, as nothing future in life can be. In our day, the belief of these facts is openly rejected ; the evidence of them is continually assailed, directly and indirectly ; baseless and thoroughly irreligious speculations are confidently put forth and widely received as substitutes for Christian faith, of which, as in mockery, they assume the name ; and there are many who acquiesce in a general notion that religion may be true, and who regard this notion as a source of consolation and hope, without any such settled conviction of its truth as may essentially affect their characters. But if there be a God in whose infinite goodness we and all things are embosom-

ed; if there be a future life which spreads before us, and all whom we love, exhaustless scenes of attainable happiness; if that Infinite Being, who so eludes the grasp of human thought, have really brought himself into direct communication with mankind; if the character of Jesus Christ be not an inexplicable riddle, but a wonderful reality, these are truths of which a wise man may well desire fully to assure himself. And perhaps there is no way in which he may attain a stronger feeling of certainty, than when he approaches them, as we have done, through reasoning conversant about ordinary subjects of thought, requiring no exercise of judgment beyond the common capacity of every intelligent man, not taking us into the dim light of metaphysical inquiry, involving the use of no uncertain language, and calling forth no doubts from that region which lies on every side beyond the bounds of our knowledge and our powers. The way which we have travelled is such, that it may by contrast heighten the effect of the prospect on which it opens. It is somewhat as if, by an easy ascent, we found ourselves standing on a vast height with the unbounded ocean spreading out before us.

BUT, however convinced we may be of the

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genuineness of the Gospels, one distinct and very important branch of the evidence of that fact has not yet been treated. It is the evidence founded on the intrinsic character of the Gospels themselves, evidence in which the proofs of their genuineness and their truth are essentially blended together. The main proposition to be established by it is, that the Gospels are of such a character, that they could have been written only by individuals of such a character, and so circumstanced, as those to whom they are ascribed.

ADDITIONAL NOTES.



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ADDITIONAL NOTES.

NOTE A.

(See pp. 51, 92, 116, and 134.)

ON THE DISTINCTION MADE BY THE ANCIENTS BETWEEN THINGS *INTELLIGIBLE* AND THINGS *SENSIBLE*; ON THE USE OF THE TERMS *SPIRITUAL* AND *MATERIAL* AS APPLIED TO THEIR SPECULATIONS; AND ON THE NATURE OF MATTER.

THE division of substances into material and spiritual, which is so familiar to us, was not equally familiar to the ancients. Instead of this, Plato and his followers adopted another. They divided all beings into *sensible*, or those perceptible by the senses, and *intelligible*, or those which are the objects of the intellect alone. To the latter class Plato assigned all general ideas, those derived from sensible objects, as well as others; not regarding these ideas, however, as mere conceptions either of the human or of the divine mind, but as proper separate existences, endued with life and divinity. They constituted his archetypal world, the *intelligible* world, after the model of which was formed the *sensible* world, the material universe. For example, goodness, beauty, unity, number, equality, roundness, whiteness, are, according to him, all of them, beings existing

apart in the perfect world of archetypal Ideas. But these Ideas are not merely the patterns of sensible things; they likewise form their essences. They communicate themselves to matter, and thus cause sensible things to be good, beautiful, one or many, equal, round, and white. But matter but imperfectly receives, and renders back, the impression of these archetypes, these ideal forms, which can be discerned only by the eye of the mind. They, when compared with the material things which bear their likeness, are the only real existences. Of these archetypes the objects of the senses are but shadowy and fleeting resemblances, coming into existence and perishing, but having no proper being. Or to express what has been said in the words of Cicero, "*Nihil* Plato putat esse, quod oriatur et intereat, idque solum *esse*, quod semper tale sit, qualem *ideam* appellat ille, nos *speciem*."*

This is an outline of the doctrine of Plato. But it may be well to enter into a little further explanation of it.

Plato in his *Timæus*,† after maintaining that the created world is a living being,‡ goes on to infer, that the pattern after which it was formed, the intelligible world of Ideas, is a perfect living being, "comprehending in itself all intelligible living beings, in the same manner as this world contains us and all other visible animals." Afterwards, he speaks of this world, with express reference to its pattern, as being "an image of the eternal gods,"§ that is, of the eternal Ideas after which it was formed; and, in the conclusion of the Dialogue, he calls the world "a visible living

* *Tusculan. Disputat. Lib. I. § 24.*

† P. 30.

‡ *Zōon*, *animal*, *living being*. The word has been commonly translated "animal"; but it would seem that our modern associations with the latter term should be avoided.

§ P. 37.

PLATO'S DOCTRINE OF IDEAS. v

being comprehending the visible animals, a sensible god, the image of the intelligible."

Cudworth, who wished to believe that Plato's intelligible world was merely an ideal image of the future creation, preëxisting in the mind of the Deity, says, that, "Plato himself speaking obscurely of this intelligible world, and the Ideas of it, no wonder if many of his pagan followers have absurdly made so many distinct animals and gods of them."* But it seems unreasonable in the present case to bring the charge of obscurity against Plato. It is difficult to perceive how he could have expressed himself more explicitly, or how language plainer than what he has used can have been used by his followers.

Cudworth afterwards says,—“It was a monstrous extravagancy of some of the later Platonists to suppose the Ideas, all of them, to be so many distinct substances and animals”; and, after remarking that this doctrine has been imputed to Plato himself by Tertullian and others, he adds,—“Neither can it be denied but that there are some odd expressions in Plato, sounding that way, who therefore may not be justified in this, nor I think in some other conceits of his, concerning these Ideas: as when he contends that they are not only the objects of science, but also the proper and physical causes of all things here below; as, for example, that the Ideas of similitude and dissimilitude are the causes of the likeness and unlikeness of all things to one another by their participation of them. Nevertheless, it cannot be at all doubted, but that Plato himself, and most of his followers, very well understood that these Ideas were, all of them, really nothing else but the *noēmata*, or conceptions, of that one perfect Intellect which was their second hypostasis [the second person of their Trinity]; and there-

* Intellectual System, Ch. IV. § 32. p. 499. Original folio Ed.



fore they could not look upon them, in good earnest, as so many distinct substances existing severally and apart by themselves out of any mind, however they were guilty of some extravagant expressions concerning them.”*

Such is the view of the subject taken by Cudworth; but he adduces no evidence in support of his assertion, that it cannot be doubted that Plato and most of his followers did not mean what they appear to mean.†

* Ibid. § 36. pp. 562, 563.

† Mosheim, in his Latin translation of Cudworth (l. 856, 857), has a note on the passage just quoted, in which he argues for the opinion asserted by Cudworth, and held by some other modern writers, that the Ideas of Plato were only ideas in the common sense of the word, existing (primarily) in the Divine Mind. But it is difficult to determine what was Mosheim's prevailing belief on the subject. He does not claim to be confident, and he certainly was not consistent, in holding the opinion which in this note he undertakes to defend; and the character of the note itself is such as to excite some suspicion that his true purpose in it was to express indirectly his strong sense of the absurdity of what he recognized to be the real doctrine of Plato.

He says that Cudworth “learnedly proves” his assertion; whereas Cudworth hardly makes a show of bringing any proof of it. He himself produces no passage from Plato in support of the position which he professes to maintain. He offers nothing but a general and very unsatisfactory explanation of the representations of Plato which are irreconcilable with it; and he takes notice, without attempting to controvert it, of the all but decisive authority of Aristotle, who ascribes to Plato the doctrine of Ideas subsisting by themselves. His sole argument, on which he is evidently not unwilling to employ much strength of language, is simply this,—That what has been represented to be the Platonic doctrine of Ideas is a doctrine too irrational to be ascribed to any intelligent man. “If I find,” he says, “an opinion ascribed to a man not deficient in capacity or learning, which is clearly absurd and foolish, and which is not necessarily connected with his other doctrines, I shall not readily be persuaded that no injustice is done him, although some passages may be produced from him which seem clearly to prove the charge. . . . But the

Plato represents his archetypal Ideas as having been

opinion which Plato is said to have held is so absurd and ridiculous, that, were it explained in proper and plain words, every one not wholly destitute of understanding would perceive its inanity and folly."

But the doctrine which Mosheim here represents as so irrational he expressly ascribes to Plato in another note, following at no great distance. "If I am not wholly deceived," he says (p. 869), "the eternal gods of Plato are no other than the eternal patterns and species of all things, conformably to which Plato conceived this world to have been formed by the Supreme Divinity." "Plato so speaks of these eternal gods, that it is apparent that he meant natures apart and separate from the highest God, to whom he ascribes the formation of the world." Farther on (p. 900), Mosheim recurs to the opinion first professed by him; that is, he says, that, "as he has before professed, he is inclined to the opinion, that the eternal patterns of things are not to be separated from God himself, except by an act of thought." But, in the very note from which this is quoted, he also says that "nothing can be plainer" than that Plato, in his *Timæus*, "distinctly separates his eternal species or Ideas from the Maker of the World"; he denies that Plato in that work taught the doctrine held by the later Platonists, of three hypostases in the Divinity; he maintains that Plato "knew of no other principal God except the Maker of the World," and affirms that "every one acquainted with the Platonic philosophy will agree that Plato did not place his eternal patterns and species of things in the principal person" of that Trinity which he has been imagined to have taught.

Whether Mosheim's strong sense of the absurdity of Plato's doctrine of Ideas did, in fact, lead him to vacillate in his opinion of what Plato intended, or whether he did not care to express his real sentiments concerning that doctrine without throwing a veil over them, are questions not easy to decide. Nor is one assisted in forming a decision by two other notes (pp. 840-846), in which he professedly attempts to exculpate even the later Platonists from meaning what they said concerning hypostatized, or animate and deified, Ideas. "It seems to me," he observes, "that their language is to be understood in a less objectionable sense than what the words at first sight seem to require; for these, if taken in their ordinary signification, would manifest the greatest folly." It may be made a question, however,

contemplated by God in the work of creation. In like

whether it is less to the credit of a writer to be a mystic and to write mystically, or to have intelligible ideas, but to be unable or unwilling to put them forth without giving them the air of absurdities.

Mosheim was of a higher order of intellect than the modern expositors of Plato among his countrymen, with whom I am acquainted. The German mind, as it has been lately exhibited, has, for the most part, shown itself unqualified for the explanation of ancient philosophy. For this, the power of distinguishing between sense and nonsense is an essential requisite. But in the later expositions of the Platonic philosophy, to which I refer, ancient and modern mysticism have run together, and formed strange combinations, in which, however, the modern element preponderates. Tennemann, in his different works, has converted the Athenian philosopher into a German metaphysician. In his hands, Plato's Ideas become Ideas of Pure Reason (in the dialect of Kant), "not having their origin in experience, but in the nature of the soul": "the Divine idea being the object of the human, the first intelligible object of the reason." (*Geschichte der Philosophie*, II. 252, 371.) But however uninformative may be Tennemann's accounts of Plato's philosophy, we shall perceive that we have made a descent in the region of intellect, when we pass from them to that of the later historian of philosophy, Ritter. His exposition of it has the characteristics which belong to the writings of many of his countrymen at the present day. The conceptions are so obscure and unformed, there is such want of skill in the use of language, the modes of expression are so imperfect, and the terms so undefined in their signification, that the show of meaning presented continually eludes us, and we proceed like travellers following a mirage in a desert. One may judge of his incapacity for thinking clearly by the degree in which he fancies himself to understand such writers.

One of the latest German expositors of Plato, Stallbaum, in the *Prolegomena* to his edition of the *Parmenides* (p. 4), after saying that he shall "aim at the greatest perspicuity of thought and expression, and not endeavour to gain the praise of talent or learning by subtle commentaries remote from the truth," proceeds thus to give a character of his fellow-laborers:—"Grassari sane hoc malum,"—the evil of giving subtle commentaries remote from the truth—"nostrâ ætate cœpit incredibiliter; id quod ipsi facile animadvertimus in legendis iis scriptis, quæ nuper de Parmenide Platónico edita sunt. In quibus,

manner, he represents them as having been contemplated by the souls of men in their preëxistent state.* As being the generic forms of things, he regarded them as the only objects of *true* knowledge. The acquisition of such knowledge consists, according to him, in awakening the reminiscences of them lying dormant in the mind. His doctrine, often repeated, was, that "Our learning is nothing but recollection."† This doctrine, that the true knowledge possessed by the mind is not here acquired, but only recollected, was his main argument for the preëxistence of the soul, with which his doctrine of its immortality was intimately connected.‡ The following is a passage from the *Phædo*:—"What, then, asked Socrates, do you say concerning that doctrine which we advanced, that learning is recollection; and that, this being so, our soul must necessarily have existed somewhere else before it was confined in the body? I was thoroughly convinced of it, said Cebes, and am not more assured of any thing. And I, said Simmias, am of the same opinion."§

Conformably to the passages which I have quoted from the *Timæus*, Plato uniformly describes his Ideas, or the generic forms of things, as *subsisting by themselves*. Thus he teaches, that there "is a certain Fire [the generic Idea of Fire] subsisting by itself, || and so with regard to all other things of which we constantly speak as subsisting by themselves."¶ "There is one form of being," he says, "always the same, unproduced and indestructible, neither

profecto, sæpenumero ambigas, magisne mireris fingendi comminiscendique impudentiam, an Latini et Germanici sermonis spurcitiem, quæ apud quosdam tanta est, ut ne unam quidem sententiam reperiās, quæ non turpissimis inquinata sit balbutientis barbariæ vitiis."

* *Phædrus*, p. 247, seqq.

† *Phædo*, p. 72.

‡ *Phædo*, pp. 72-77. *Meno*, p. 81, seqq.

§ *Phædo*, pp. 91, 92.

|| "Ἔστι τι πῦρ αὐτὸ ἐφ' ἑαυτοῦ.

¶ Ἄβρ' καὶ αὐτά.

receiving any thing foreign into itself, nor passing to any thing without itself, not perceptible by the sight nor by any of the senses, which it belongs to the intellect to contemplate";—and with this he proceeds immediately to contrast those forms of being, its similitudes, which exist in the sensible world.* As I have before said, he uniformly regards these Ideas, when compared with sensible things, as the only *real* existences. Thus he says,—“The Equal, the Beautiful, every thing which has a real existence,† admits of no change whatever. Every one of these things possessing real existence, having a single form, subsisting by itself, continues always the same.”‡

Besides Cudworth, other modern expositors of Plato have contended that his Ideas are ideas in the modern sense of the term, existing in the mind of God and in the human mind. But such language as has been quoted from him seems wholly irreconcilable with this supposition. Ideas which he represents as constituting the ideal world, the counterpart of the sensible, as living and divine beings, as subsisting by themselves, as real existences, he could not have conceived of as ideas either of the Divine or of the human mind in the now common sense of the word “idea.” It is imputing something more than obscurity and mysticism to a writer to suppose that he commonly states a characteristic doctrine of his philosophy in words that are inconsistent with his real meaning.

It may, indeed, be doubted, whether any passage can be produced from the writings of Plato, in which he uses the word Ἰδέα, *Idea*, properly *Image*, or its equivalent, Εἶδος,

* *Timæus*, pp. 51, 52.

† *Αὐτὸ ἕκαστον, ὃ ἐστὶ τὸ ὄν.* Plato just before speaks of αὐτῇ ἡ οὐσία ἧς λόγον δίδομεν τοῦ εἶναι,—“that form of being which we define as *what exists*.”

‡ *Phædo*, p. 78.

Form, to denote what is expressed by our word "idea," namely, a subject of thought considered merely as existing in the mind. Those words he uses to denote an external object of thought; and though the transition is easy from the latter meaning to the former, yet it was not, to say the least, familiar to Plato. We use the term "idea" to denote a subject of thought of whatever kind, general or particular. The primary sense ascribed to it by Plato in relation to his theory of Ideas was altogether different. By his Ideas or Images, he means the types of the respective classes of beings and qualities.* The only question is, whether he considered these as simply ideal types (in our sense of the word "ideal"), existing primarily in the mind of God, and to be discerned by the human intellect; or whether he considered them as proper beings, subsisting by themselves, as he has so often described them.

Plato treats of his doctrine of Ideas in the latter part of the sixth and the beginning of the seventh book of his *Republic*. He introduces an allegory, in which he represents men as so confined in a cavern as to be able to see only a succession of shadows passing over the side of it opposite to them. These shadows he supposes to be produced by a train of real objects moving along the top of a wall behind those who are thus confined. The shadows, according to him, correspond to the fleeting semblances of eternal Ideas, which alone can be discerned in the sensible world. The real objects are the eternal Ideas themselves. The light which casts those shadows is the Sun.† The Sun is "the offspring of The Good," that is, of the universal Idea of

* In the old logical nomenclature the term "being" is applied to qualities as well as to substances; but it is more convenient, and more conformable to the popular use of language, to confine its application to the latter.

† *De Republica*, Lib. VII. p. 514, seqq.

Good.* "It resembles the being which produced it. In the intelligible region The Good bears the same relation to intellect and the objects of intellect, which the Sun bears to sight and the objects of sight in the visible world." In one of those passages which undoubtedly prepared the way for Gnosticism, Plato goes on to teach, that over the two classes of beings, the intelligible and the visible, there are two rulers, the Idea of Good over the intelligible, and the Sun over the visible.† The Idea of Good he thus identifies with the Deity. He says:—"Among things knowable, the Idea of Good is the last, and hardly to be discerned; ‡ but, when discerned, it evidently appears to be the cause of all things right and beautiful in the universe; in the visible world producing light and the lord of light [the Sun], and being itself the ruler in the intelligible world, the source of truth and intellect." §

There is another passage of Plato which throws a strong light on his doctrine of Ideas. It is in the tenth book of his Republic. || He is treating of the imitative arts, which it is here his purpose to degrade by representing them as giving only copies of copies of what really exists. He illustrates his meaning by the homely example of the picture of a bed, or a couch for reclining on at table. ¶ "There are three beds," he says; "one existing in nature, which, I think, we may assert to be the work of God; one produced by the human workman; and one that of the painter." God, he teaches, has formed but one bed alone, that which

* In this discussion Plato uses indiscriminately *Τάγαθόν*, "The Good," and *ἡ ἰδέα τοῦ Ἀγαθοῦ*, "the Idea of Good," as synonymous.

† De Republicâ, Lib. VI. pp. 506, 509.

‡ See before, p. 24.

§ De Republicâ, Lib. VII. p. 517.

|| Pp. 596, 597.

¶ *Κλίβη*.

really exists,* the archetypal Idea of a bed. The human workman does not make the Idea, which is the real bed, but something like that which really exists,† and of his work the painter only gives a copy. ‡

* 'Ο Θεός, βουλόμενος εἶναι ὅντως κλίνης ποιητῆς ὅντως οὐσης.

† 'Ο κλισοποιὸς οὐ τὸ εἶδος ποιεῖ δὲ δὴ φάμεν εἶναι δὲ ἴσθι κλίνην, ἀλλὰ κλίνην τινα. Οὐκ ἂν τὸ δὲ ποιῶι, ἀλλὰ τι τοιοῦτον οἷον τὸ δὲ, δὲ δὲ οὐ.

‡ We must understand Plato as meaning by his Ideas either Images subsisting by themselves, a representation to which his own language, and that of his opponents and of his followers, fully correspond; or we must understand him as meaning by them nothing more than abstract, general ideas, in the now common sense of that term. But putting out of view what I conceive to be the impossibility of reconciling the latter supposition with the language of Plato, the question remains to be answered, What was it which constituted his doctrine of Ideas a distinguishing characteristic of his philosophy, if he meant by his Ideas nothing more than general ideas in the common sense of those words? That doctrine was called by the Platonist Atticus (in the second century) "the chief and fundamental doctrine of his peculiar philosophy";—Τὸ δὲ κεφάλαιον καὶ τὸ κύριον τῆς Πλάτωνος αἰρέσεως, ἡ περὶ τῶν νοητῶν διάταξις. (Apud Eusebii Præparat. Evang. Lib. XV. § 13. p. 815.) Seneca (Epist. 58) calls it "the proper household furniture" (*propria suppellex*) of Plato. Similar language has been continued to our own day. By Stallbaum it is said to be *velut arx atque caput totius ejus discipline*, "the citadel, as it were, and head of his whole doctrine." But all philosophy is conversant about general ideas. Without them there can be no philosophy. In recognizing their existence, therefore, there could be nothing peculiar in the philosophy of Plato. These are statements so obvious, that, at first view, it may seem idle thus formally to announce them.

It may, however, be said, that the peculiarity in Plato's philosophy consisted in his maintaining, that general ideas are not to be acquired in this world of the senses, but that the soul brings them with her from a preëxistent state, and that all true knowledge consists in recollecting these ideas as the soul has formerly possessed them. This doctrine may be regarded as peculiar; but it cannot serve for the ba-

To the notion of Plato, that Ideas constitute the essences of sensible things, I shall advert hereafter. In reference to what we have gone over, it may be observed, that Plato does not represent his Ideas, or archetypal Images, as existing in the mind of God, but as subsisting by themselves. The Idea of Good, as we have seen, he converts into the Supreme Divinity. In analogy with this, we might suppose that he *hypostatized* his other Ideas, and thus made an indefinite number of inferior *conscious* gods. But I do not presume that any such consistency is to be looked for in his speculations. Nor, though he speaks of his Ideas as living beings and gods, do I think that he has made it manifest that he regarded them, *generally*, as proper persons; for, in calling them "gods," he may have meant only to ascribe to them divine power. The transition from the conception of them as beings animate and divine to the conception of them as beings endued with consciousness and will is but a step; but it is a step that involves a new plunge into mysticism, which it is not certain that Plato made. It was made, however, by his followers in later times. Philo founded the Ideas of Plato with the hypostatized powers of God, and represents the whole archetypal world as the hypostatized Logos.* The theosophic Gnostics, in like man-

sis of a system of philosophy. The fact announced by it cannot be applied to the decision of any question that admits of doubt. If there be a controversy respecting the true nature of any general idea; if individuals differ, for instance, concerning the nature of virtue, or what constitutes an action virtuous, each may appeal with equal confidence to the accuracy of his own recollections; and there can be nothing to decide between them. If all true knowledge consists in the recollection of what was known to the soul in a preëxistent state, it would seem that only two important conclusions can be drawn from this fact, — one, which Plato does infer, that the soul has preëxisted, and the other, that all exercise of reason is useless in the acquisition of knowledge.

* See Statement of Reasons, pp 261 – 266.

ner, regarded them as being at once ideas belonging to the mind of God and proper persons. Throughout the writings of the later Platonists, these Ideas appear as living beings, gods, and persons, but at the same time as existing in the second hypostasis of their Trinity.*

Plato's doctrine concerning Ideas had a wide influence on opinion in ancient times. Nor has its influence ceased in our own. The obvious remark, that it rests, and can rest, on no proof, may seem strange and out of place. It is bringing it into collision with modes of thinking with which it has nothing to do. It is a remark of much the same kind, as if one were to say that there is no historical authority for the stories of Ariosto. But, putting this want of evidence out of view, if we attempt to reduce the doctrine of Plato to an intelligible form, we find ourselves encountered on every side by absurdities and inconsistencies.

The Ideas of Plato are *images*. Now there are many objects of which we may *imagine* an archetypal model. We may imagine, for instance, a generic, standard, Idea of man, to which living men more or less approximate. But, even in regard to this simplest mode of apprehending what was in the mind of Plato, we cannot imagine an archetypal model of a man, abstracted from the peculiarities of any particular age. In attempting to proceed in the application of his doctrine to qualities, we are immediately arrested. He often speaks of the Idea of the Beautiful,—of The Beautiful in the abstract. But we cannot conceive of an abstract *image* of the Beautiful, conformed to no particular beauty, but equally to the beauty of moral actions, of man, of the inferior animals, and of inanimate nature. We may personify Virtue poetically, as an object of the imagination; but, as an object of the understanding, we can make no im-

* See Cudworth's Intellectual System, Ch. 4. § 36.

age of the abstract idea of virtue. All images conceived by the mind have a form; but we can give no form to Plato's abstract Idea of Unity.

The Ideas or Images of Plato exist, according to him, by themselves, out of any mind. What we can properly conceive of only as the accidents of mind are thus represented by him as existing separately from mind. The absurdity will not be lessened, should we suppose that he did not regard them as existing separately from mind, but that, in common with his followers who lived centuries after his death, he converted the ideas in the mind of God into substances, living beings, and gods.

Again, Plato represents his Ideas as existing apart from any thing else, always the same, admitting no change, neither receiving any thing foreign into themselves, nor passing into any thing without themselves;* and yet these same Ideas he also represents as in some way acting on matter and constituting the essences of sensible things. In what manner he imagined this might be, he does not explain. He puts the following words into the mouth of Socrates:—"I suppose that there is something beautiful by itself, and something good, and something great, and so with regard to all other things. . . . It appears to me that whatever is beautiful, besides The Beautiful itself, becomes so only by partaking of The Beautiful. . . . Should any one tell me that a thing is beautiful either on account of its fine color, or its form, or any thing of like sort, I dismiss all these reasons, for they only perplex me, and simply, directly, and perhaps foolishly, hold to this, that there is no other cause why it is beautiful except the presence of The Beautiful, or its being associated with it.† Of the mode I as yet affirm

* See before, pp. ix-x.

† Τοῦ καλοῦ εἴτε παρουσία, εἴτε κοινωνία, εἴτε ὅπη δὴ καὶ ὅπως προσγενομένη. As the text of the last clause is apparently cor-

nothing, but only that all beautiful things become beautiful by means of The Beautiful."* This doctrine Socrates is represented as illustrating, till all his hearers agree, "that each of the several Ideas exists, and that other things bear their names through participation of them."† This is in the *Phædo*. The same doctrine is insisted upon in the *Timæus*; where, in speaking of primitive matter, it is taught, that "the resemblances of those things which eternally exist, impressed by them in a wonderful manner, hard to be explained, enter into and depart from primitive matter," constituting its sensible forms; and that thus, "in a way very difficult to be understood, primitive matter partakes of the intelligible."‡

To this account of Plato's theory respecting Ideas as constituting sensible qualities, it would seem as if nothing could be added to illustrate the character of his speculations under the aspect in which we are now regarding them. But the concluding argument for the immortality of the soul in his *Phædo* rests on a discussion concerning the changes of sensible qualities in material things. According to what is there maintained, when a quality is changed into its opposite, as heat, for example, into cold, the Idea constituting in the sensible object the quality changed, not admitting the Idea of its opposite, either flies off or perishes.§ This conception is plainly expressed by Plato, is dwelt upon and illustrated, and is essential to his reasoning. But with this conception are to be compared his descriptions, before quoted, of eternal, unchangeable Ideas, passing into nothing without themselves.

But it may be said, that we are not to understand the

rupt, and, however it may be understood, adds nothing essential to the meaning, I have not attempted to translate it.

* *Phædo*, p. 100. † *Ibid.* p. 102. ‡ *Timæus*, pp. 50, 51.

§ *Phædo*, pp. 102 - 106.

words of Plato in their obvious sense. It may be contended, that, in affirming that ideas in some inexplicable manner constitute the essences of sensible things, he meant nothing more than that God, having these ideas in his mind, impressed them upon matter,—the idea of beauty, for instance, on all things beautiful. It is not necessary to discuss the question, whether this supposition can be reconciled with his language. Were the supposition true, it would follow that what has been regarded as a characteristic doctrine of his philosophy consists in the enunciation, in very unsuitable language, of the proposition, that sensible things are beautiful because God made them beautiful; and in teaching that no further explanation is to be given of the matter. At the same time, according to this mode of understanding him, his machinery of ideas becomes useless. Nor will a more important doctrine be ascribed to him, if it be maintained that his meaning was, that particular things are beautiful because they partake of *the abstract idea of beauty*,—the last words being understood in their common signification. On the contrary, we shall only have introduced a new absurdity by representing sensible things as partaking of an abstract idea. Or should it be said that this expression, “partaking of an idea,” is not to be understood in a literal sense, but in a looser signification, it would seem that the meaning can be only, that beautiful things are beautiful because they partake of beauty.

We may not agree with the doctrine of Berkeley, that there are, properly speaking, no abstract general ideas, and that what have been regarded as such are only particular ideas, taken as representatives of the whole class to which they belong. This doctrine seems to have resulted from confounding an idea with an image existing in the mind. But if we mean by an idea merely a subject of thought, there can be no question about the existence of abstract

ideas. We may reason, and consequently think, about virtue, or the quality which constitutes actions morally good, without having in mind the particular idea of any virtuous man. I do not say, of any virtuous action, or of any single virtue, because these are themselves abstract ideas. We may discuss Berkeley's own doctrine, that there is no ground for distinguishing between color and extension by denoting the former a secondary and the latter a primary property of matter, without having in our minds the idea of any particular color, or any particular form of extension, or any particular mass of matter,—not to advert to any other of the general ideas involved in that statement. But it will not be maintained, that, in discussing the doctrine, neither color, nor extension, nor matter is a subject of thought. We cannot, however, hesitate to agree with Berkeley, so far as to admit the fact, that there can be no image of an abstract idea; and this fact shows, that, wide as has been the influence of Plato's doctrine of Ideas, it is impossible to form a coherent imagination of it.*

* There are two ways in which such a theory as that of Plato may be considered. It may be surveyed, as it were, from a distance, and regarded in its various relations, under the broad light of reason; or one may confine his views to those of the writer, enter into the sphere of his conceptions, and meet him on his own ground. It is in the latter mode that the theory of Plato is considered in the Dialogue called "Parmenides," from the name of the principal speaker,—a dialogue which, since about five centuries after the death of Plato, has been commonly ascribed to that philosopher himself; but which I believe to have been written by one of his contemporaries in confutation and ridicule of his doctrine of Ideas. It is, I conceive, a persevering and destructive assault upon that doctrine, though after a fashion of reasoning altogether remote from that of the present day. The course of argument pursued in it is very narrow, so that no general truth is illustrated. It is unnecessarily diffuse, and there is much mere verbal subtlety and sophistry. But an ironical tone runs through it; and the

The Ideas of Plato belonged to the class of *intelligible* beings; and to the same class, conformably to his use of

question may often arise, whether the author be not sporting with his subject, without any other purpose than to perplex and confound an opponent. In its general character, the *Parmenides* is very unlike a dialogue of Plato. It has no ornaments and no digressions. The business in hand is kept steadily in view. The writer does not conduct us through indirect approaches to his subject, and then, after affording a glimpse of it, turn off in another direction.

The point against which the author first directs his attack is the doctrine of Plato, that Ideas constitute in some way the essences of things. The discussion of this doctrine is represented as having been carried on between *Parmenides* and *Socrates*. The object of the writer is to show that the theory is untenable, whatever form it may assume, or in whatever way it may be explained. One hypothesis is stated after another, and *Socrates* is driven to abandon them all. (pp. 130 – 133.) *Parmenides* then, by a dexterous management of words, is represented as bringing him fully to admit, that, supposing Ideas to exist apart from sensible things, we can have no knowledge of them whatever; or, as it is expressed by the writer, that only a wonderfully able person can learn or teach any thing concerning them. (pp. 133 – 135.)

Socrates is described as being, at the time of this discussion, a young man. It may be conjectured that it was the purpose of the writer of the *Parmenides* to imply, that the doctrine of Ideas, which Plato ascribes to *Socrates* in his *Phædo*, could have been held by *Socrates* only when his mind was yet unformed and his judgment immature. *Parmenides*, at the conclusion of this portion of the Dialogue, is represented as complimenting *Socrates* on his natural capacity, and on his zeal for discussion, but as admonishing him for undertaking to determine too much before he had acquired the requisite dialectical skill, — that skill, says *Parmenides*, which to many seems useless and trifling. (p. 135.) If I have rightly conceived the character of the Dialogue, this tone of superiority and admonition was meant for Plato himself; and the praise of dialectical skill, in which the sophists regarded themselves as excelling, was intended as a retort for the attacks upon them by him, and his master, *Socrates*.

Such is the commencement of the discussion. But *Parmenides* is represented as being persuaded to continue it, not with *Socrates*, who

language, belonged all those beings which we regard as not objects of the senses,—as spiritual beings. The latter

is silenced, but with another young man whom he questions. The two problems now proposed are, What will follow upon the supposition of the existence of Ideas (Platonic Ideas)? and What will follow upon the supposition of their non-existence? In regard to the first question, the manner in which they are considered may be thus explained.

These abstract Ideas, subsistent by themselves, must be *simply* the abstract Ideas of classes of beings and qualities. They are such Ideas and nothing more. Nothing else is predicable of them. The abstract Idea of Beauty is nothing but the abstract Idea of Beauty. The writer illustrates the absurdities which are inherent in such an hypothesis by taking the Idea of Unity (*Tò 'En, The One.*) Of this nothing can be affirmed but that it is the Idea of Unity. By affirming any thing else concerning it, another Idea is connected with it. It ceases to be simply the Idea of Unity. But if nothing else can be predicated of it, every thing else may be denied concerning it. The conclusion that follows would be arrived at by a modern reasoner in a few words; but Parmenides takes his way to it through a series of questions, somewhat amusing from their subtlety. The conclusion is, that existence cannot be predicated of the Idea of Unity. Consequently (on the theory of Ideas), there can be no such thing as unity. "But is it possible," asks Parmenides, "that such can be the fact respecting Unity?" "Not, as it seems to me," answers the young man whom he has been questioning. (pp. 137–142.)

Parmenides then starts afresh, on the supposition that the Idea of Unity *exists*. But if Unity exist, another Idea, that of Existence, is inseparably connected with it. It remains no longer a simple, but becomes a twofold Idea. It consists of the Idea of Unity and the Idea of Existence. By the latter it is also constituted a proper being.

Of the Idea of Unity, simply considered, nothing could be predicated. But of the Idea of Unity, considered as connected with the Idea of Existence, many things may be predicated; and it is the purpose of the writer, which he pursues at much length, to show that many things may be predicated of it, which are inconsistent with the Idea of Unity and contradictory to each other. Thus he arrives at last at the conclusion, that Unity, The One, is all things, and that there is no such thing as Unity.

were blended with those subsistent, living abstractions, of which we cannot even form a conception. As we have

The supposition, that the Platonic Idea of Unity *exists*, is thus reduced to an absurdity, or rather, in the course of the discussion, to a succession of absurdities. (pp. 142-160.)

From this portion of the work we pass to the concluding part (pp. 160-166), which treats of "what will follow, if the Idea of Unity does not exist." The purpose of the writer, so far as it regards his argument, may be thus explained. It having been proved that the Platonic Idea of Unity does not exist, it follows, *on the theory of Ideas*, that there is no unity in nature, or, in other words, that there is no being of which we may affirm that it is one being and not many. The writer proceeds to unfold the absurdities involved in this consequence.

But it may be doubted whether he did not regard his main business as finished, and whether he had much other purpose in this conclusion than to make a display of his adroitness in playing tricks with words. But his attempts at deception are sometimes too easily seen through. He begins with a sophism (pp. 160, 161), on which he dwells at some length, but the amount of which is, that, in denying that the Idea of Unity exists, if we use words with any meaning, we must have in our minds the very idea of unity, of which we deny the existence. But he does not advert to the fact, that this idea of unity in our own minds is not the Platonic, self-subsistent Idea of Unity.

He next (p. 162) proceeds to a still bolder sophism. The hypothesis is, that "Unity does not exist." But nothing could be made of this proposition which would serve his purpose. He therefore throws it into another form,—"Unity IS non-existent." Here existence is predicated of Unity in the very act of denying its existence; for in doing so we say "It IS." "In order to be non-existent," he reasons, "it must partake of existence." Afterwards (p. 165) we find an argument which is founded merely on a verbal quibble,—a pun. It is of course untranslatable, but it may be explained. It is a play on the words *μηδέν* and *οὐδέν*, both which, according to their etymology, mean "not one," "no one thing," but are both commonly used in the sense of "nothing." The writer contends, that, if Unity does not exist, other things cannot exist. They can be neither *one* nor *many*. "There is *no one thing*, *μηδέν*, among them, and therefore they all are *nothing*, *οὐδέν*, and cannot be many." — Yet such writing as this

seen, God himself is represented by him as an Idea, the abstract Idea of Goodness. I do not think that he represents

has been considered as a grave exposition of the profoundest wisdom of Plato.

If we fix in our minds that representation of Plato's doctrine of Ideas which has been given above, and take the view of the *Parmenides* which has been now presented, I think we shall not find it, as it has been regarded, a work of very extraordinary obscurity. On the contrary, we shall be furnished with a key by which we can make our way throughout. The locks are not of a modern fashion, and the bolts are rusty with age, so that it may require some skill and effort to shoot them back ; but we shall find, I believe, no essential obstacle in our way. The main difficulty in understanding the work will consist in the difficulty of keeping our attention steadily fixed upon modes of conception to which we are wholly unaccustomed.

If I may use the figure of a key in a different sense, the *Parmenides* may be compared to a writing in cipher. On the supposition of its being the work of Plato, I have met with no plausible, nor even intelligible, explanation of its purpose and meaning. But if, taking the representations that have been given of the doctrine of Plato and of the design of the *Parmenides*, we perceive a distinct purpose and connected meaning in the work, there can be no doubt that the key of the cipher has been found, and that those representations are essentially true.

It may seem that in three, at least, of the Dialogues of Plato there are evidences of the vexation which this attack occasioned him. In the *Philebus* (pp. 15, 16), he turns aside, as far as I can perceive, from the proper business of the Dialogue to treat of *The One* and *The Many*, and to describe a young man, who, having got some notion of *The One* and *The Many*, thinks he has found a treasure of wisdom, is transported by the discovery, and ready for any discussion ; now rolling things into one, and now unfolding them ; confounding himself and others ; and sparing no listener that comes in his way, neither young nor old, nor father nor mother, nor even a barbarian, if he can get an interpreter. Such language looks very much as if it were directed against some particular individual, and is such as, on the supposition which has been maintained, Plato might have used in expressing his spleen against the author of the *Parmenides*. Throughout the *Theætetus*, and the *Sophist*, which is a continuation of the *The-*

the soul as an Idea, but he expressly refers it to the same general class of beings with Ideas.* The intelligible world

etetus, Plato appears to me to have had the *Parmenides* in view. There are, I think, in these Dialogues, various evident references to it; and they seem to me, particularly the *Sophist*, as intended for an answer to it. Gray (Matthias's Ed. of his Works, II. 412) says of the *Sophist*:—"That part of this dialogue which is intended to explain the nature of existence and non-existence is to me obscure beyond all comprehension." Some light, perhaps, is thrown upon it by considering it as having reference to what is said in the *Parmenides* concerning the Idea of Unity, considered as existing or as non-existing. The long attack on the character of a sophist, which forms the main thread of this Dialogue, I imagine to have been directed against the author of the *Parmenides*. He, I presume, was regarded by Plato as one of the number of those whom he describes, particularly in the conclusion of the work (p. 268), "as by their brief questions compelling a fellow-dialogist to contradict himself."

But the *Parmenides*, having been thought to be a work of Plato, has been regarded as a book of the most recondite wisdom. "If," says Bishop Horsley, in his controversy with Dr. Priestley, "If you imagine that the absolute Unity of the divine substance is more easily to be explained than the Trinity, let me entreat you, Sir, to read the *Parmenides*. It is indeed in Plato's school, if anywhere, that a man's eyes are likely to be opened to his own ignorance." "I have read the *Parmenides*," says Dr. Priestley in reply, "and I have no scruple to declare, that I was not able to get one ray of good sense from the whole of it."

Assuming the view which I have taken of the *Parmenides* to be correct, we may go on to observe, that the great mistake, of supposing a work written in confutation and ridicule of Plato's philosophy to be a most profound exhibition of it by Plato himself, has afforded an opportunity for rioting in mysticism, such as has been rarely enjoyed. The *Parmenides* has been regarded with religious reverence, and subjected to very extraordinary interpretations. Proclus begins his commentary upon it with a prayer to all the Platonic gods, that he may be enabled to understand this inspired work, and be initiated into its most high mysteries. It was explained by him as containing the whole sum of theology. Ficinus, the most eminent Platonist of mod-

* Phædo, pp. 79, 80.

thus became a land of shadows and chimeras, in which the real beings that appear are confounded with a crowd of dim and shapeless phantoms.

ern times, followed in the steps of Proclus. Like him, he transformed the Idea of Unity into the Divinity, and regarded the work as an account of the derivation of other beings from the Supreme. "Let him," he says, "who would come to its sacred reading, first prepare himself by sobriety of soul and freedom of mind, before daring to approach the mysteries of this celestial work." And, to descend to the less exalted language of our own times, the last commentator on the *Parmenides* with whom I am acquainted (Stallbaum), whose exposition is as intelligible as the *Parmenides* itself, when considered as the production of Plato, calls it "a most subtle and weighty discussion," "a truly great and magnificent monument of ancient philosophy," "a divine work."

The opinion which I have expressed of the *Parmenides* occurred to me many years ago, upon first reading that Dialogue, and has only been confirmed by subsequent examination. If this view of it be correct, Socher deserves the praise of having first presented it to the world in his work "*Ueber Platon's Schriften*" (*On Plato's Writings*). But it appears to have found no favor among his countrymen.

Any explanation of Plato's doctrine of Ideas must be imperfect and unsatisfactory, unless accompanied by some account of the *Parmenides*, which, however little understood, or however differently interpreted, has been regarded as his great work on the subject, a storehouse of wisdom all but incomprehensible. The limits within which it has been proper for me to confine myself have precluded the possibility of entering into detail; but perhaps the suggestions that have been made are sufficient to guide an intelligent reader in forming his own opinion concerning this Dialogue. If it be a work such as I have supposed, there is nothing more curious or more instructive, in the history of literature, than the mistake committed concerning it, and the manner in which it has consequently been estimated. There is nothing which more strongly illustrates those tendencies of the mind which we class together under the name of mysticism,—the propensity to admire the unintelligible, and to glory in absurdities, as in truths surpassing vulgar comprehension.

SUCH was the division made by Plato and his followers of beings into *intelligible* and *sensible*. We have next to consider what was the distinction made by the ancients between *spiritual* and *material* things. This distinction had a general resemblance to that just explained, but was far from being coincident with the distinction which in modern times we denote by the use of those terms.

It was a common doctrine, as we have seen, that evil is inherent in matter, and that, in matter, existing evils, physical and moral, have their source. But, however widely different were the properties which the ancients ascribed to things material and things spiritual, their notions of them ran together, and were so blended that it is impossible to separate them and fix the limits of each division. There was a general absence of clear and definite conceptions of the existence of any thing either not material, according to our use of language, or not inseparably united with matter. The distinction between the material and the spiritual was generally only a distinction between gross, inert, and earthy matter, and matter, rare, ethereal, and sometimes luminous. It may be illustrated by the conception, entertained, perhaps correctly, by most Christians at the present day, of the spiritual world, which, I suppose, is not that of a world of pure disembodied spirits alone, but includes the idea of bodies of ethereal mould, having a resemblance to those on earth. As denoting such bodies, the word *spiritual* is used by St. Paul, when he says, "An animal body is sown, a spiritual body is raised: there is an animal body, and there is a spiritual body";*—expressions which, though they may seem strange to us, and highly metaphorical, presented to a contemporary reader only a common use of language. By a "spiritual body," such a reader would under-

* 1 Corinthians, xv. 44.

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stand (to use the words of Chrysostom) "a body lighter and more subtile, and such as might be borne on the air."* The Greek word πνεῦμα, which we translate *spirit*, denoted in its primary meaning *breath*, or *air in motion*, and this material sense clung to it for a long time in its derivative meanings. A very striking example of the difference between that word and our word *spirit* is afforded by Origen, who, in arguing that God is incorporeal, undertakes to *answer* those "who think that God has a body, because it is said that God is a spirit, πνεῦμα."† Origen himself says, that the passage, if taken literally, would convey this meaning.‡

Origen believed God to be incorporeal, apparently in the proper sense of the term.§ Tertullian, on the contrary, conceived of God as having a body, but an "*immaterial*" body; for Tertullian was one of the first who maintained, that matter did not exist from eternity, but was created by God. The terms "body," "corporeal," and "incorporeal" were used by the ancients as vaguely as the word "*spiritual*." "Who will deny," asks Tertullian, "that God is a body, although God is a spirit? For a spirit is a body of its own nature in its own form."|| He says in another place: "That which constitutes any thing a being is its body. Whatever exists is a body of its own nature; nothing which has a being is incorporeal."¶ In his treatise "Concerning the Soul" he contends that it was not formed out of matter, but breathed into man by God, and at the same time affirms it to be corporeal, and to have a visible form.

* Homil. xli. in I. Ep. ad Corinth. col. 465. Ed. 1697.

† De Principiis, Lib. I. c. 1. § 2. Opp. I. 50.

‡ Comment. in Joan. iv. 24. Opp. IV. 230.

§ De Principiis, Lib. I. c. 1. Opp. I. 49, seqq. Vid. etiam Huetii Origeniana, Lib. II. Quest. 1. § 6.

|| Adversus Praxeam, c. 7. p. 504.

¶ De Carne Christi, c. 11. p. 317.

In conceiving of God and the soul as corporeal, Tertulian had in his own age abundant authorities on his side. The greatest genius and the clearest thinker among the ancient philosophers, Cicero, says that the doctrine of Xenocrates, that the soul is incorporeal mind, is scarcely comprehensible.* The God of the Stoics was an ethereal fire penetrating and moving the Universe. The representation of God as pure light was familiar to the Christian fathers; and though none could make a wider distinction between the spiritual and the material world than the Gnostics and the Manichæans, yet the same conception of God was entertained by them.† It is expressed by the Valentinian, Ptolemy;‡ and in the *Doctrina Orientalis* it is taught, that no spiritual beings, neither archangels, nor the first manifestation of the Deity, who is identical with God, are incorporeal or without their peculiar forms; he, the Son, the First-born, being light inaccessible.§ Such were the opinions of those heretics. Turning again to the catholic Christians, we may observe, that, when the council of Nice decided that the Son “was God of God, light of light,” they did not intend that the last words should be taken in a metaphorical sense. Their meaning was, that the substance of the Son, being light, was derived from and coëssential with that light which was the substance of the Father. || A met-

* Academic. Quest. Lib. IV. § 39.

† In regard to the Manichæans, see Beausobre, I. 466, seqq.

‡ Epist. ad Floram.

§ *Doctrina Orientalis*, § 10. Conf. § 8.

|| Milton apprehended the Deity in a similar manner, when he addressed Light as being “of the Eternal coëternal beam,” as “Bright effluence of bright essence, increate”; “since God is Light.” From this notion of the Deity, “arose among the Greeks in the fourteenth century a violent controversy upon a question much more curious than useful” (I quote Beausobre), “that is to say, Whether the light

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aphor, however understood, would not be to the purpose of the Creed, which was not to declare that the Son derived any moral or intellectual property from the Father which might be denominated *light*, but to declare him to be, properly speaking, consubstantial with the Father. The comprehension both of the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity and of the Gnostic system of Æons, so far as either could be comprehended, was facilitated without doubt by these material conceptions of the Deity.

As regards most of those ancients who affirmed the Deity or the soul to be incorporeal, it may be doubted whether they differed essentially in opinion from those who regarded them as having a body; so loose and uncertain was the meaning of the word "incorporeal," ἀσώματος. The following examples of this uncertainty are given by Cudworth, who, with his customary fairness, adduces them in opposition to his own argument. "The word *incorporeal*," he says, "may be taken for a thin and subtile body." In this sense, he observes, that according to Aristotle, "fire was by some said to be μάλιστα τῶν στοιχείων ἀσώματος and ἀσωματώτατον," that is, "*the most incorporeal of all the elements*." "Aristotle himself," he adds, "uses the word in the same manner, when he affirms that all philosophers defined the soul by three things, *Motion*, *Sense*, and *Incorporeity*," whereas "several of those there mentioned by him

which shone round Jesus Christ at his transfiguration was created or uncreated light." (Histoire du Manichéisme, I. 470.)

In his Treatise on Christian Doctrine, Milton proceeds much farther in ascribing corporeity to the Supreme Being. "If God," he asks, "habitually assigns to himself [in Scripture] the members and form of a man, why should we be afraid of attributing to him what he attributes to himself?" B. I. Ch. II. Such a question, proposed by one of the most enlightened minds of the seventeenth century, may teach us tolerance for those eminent men who erred as grossly in ancient days.

understood the soul to be no otherwise incorporeal than as *σῶμα λεπτόμερες, a thin and subtile body.*"* It was in this meaning of the word, that the fathers denominated the angels *incorporeal*, not regarding them as without bodies, but as having ethereal bodies, free from all grosser matter.

In the first book of his Tusculan Disputations, Cicero enumerates the opinions of the ancient philosophers concerning the soul. No one of the opinions mentioned by him can be considered as involving the belief, that the soul is a spiritual being in the modern sense of the term, capable of existing separate from matter. Nor does this appear to have been the common belief of the early Christians, either catholics or heretics. In regard to the whole question, we must recollect what has been before observed, that the conceptions of the ancients generally were not conformed to our modern distinction of beings into material and spiritual, and that they were not familiar with the senses in which we use those terms. The loose classification of beings, to which those terms in their ancient sense were applied, has only an apparent resemblance to our own.

I have already mentioned† a remarkable fact, which may serve to show the state of ancient philosophy, that neither the Greek word equivalent to "matter," *ὑλη*, nor any other single word, was used by Plato to denote matter. The word *ὑλη*, which was afterwards employed in this signification, originally denoted *a wood*, hence *wood*, and hence the relative idea of the *material* of a thing, in which sense it is used by Plato, and not as expressing the absolute idea of *matter*. Plato, however, speaks of matter without using its name; of matter, as an object of the senses, in the forms in which it presents itself in the creation, and also of prim-

* Intellectual System, Ch. V. Sect. 3. pp. 778, 779.

† See before, p. 51, note.

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itive matter, that is, matter as it existed before the creation, coëternal with the Deity. According to one of his representations of matter as it existed in its primal state, it corresponded to the imaginary *substratum* of the logicians. He conceived of it simply as the basis on which all sensible properties afterwards supervened, being in itself without properties. In other words, it was the mere recipient of his intelligible forms; all objects of the senses being the joint product of the union of these forms, or archetypal Ideas, with primitive matter. He thus describes it as the matrix of all things sensible, as being fitted for the reception of all qualities, by being itself destitute of all; as "without form, invisible, something very difficult to be comprehended."* The later Platonists added to the description, that it was *incorporeal*,—a strange doctrine according to our use of the term, but easily understood in reference to the ancient sense of the word.† But it is to be observed, that this account of primitive matter, which is given by Plato in one passage of his *Timæus*, is altogether inconsistent with the conceptions which he elsewhere expresses of matter as the cause of evil, as having a nature contrary to the will of the Deity, and as having been in a state of discordant and disorderly motion before it was reduced by him to its present forms.‡

I WILL here venture to make a few remarks, which, if correct, may serve to show the extent of the ancient error

* *Timæus*, p. 51. See also what precedes and follows.

† Some striking passages to this effect from Plotinus are given by Massuet in one of his notes on Irenæus, p. 22. But, long before the time of the later Platonists, Aristotle speaks of metaphysicians who regarded primitive matter as incorporeal. See the passage quoted from him by Cudworth, Ch. V. Sect. 2. p. 765.

‡ See before, p. 50, seqq.

concerning the evil properties of matter, and to remove other misapprehensions of its nature.*

* The doctrine to be stated above, it will be perceived, is essentially the same with that of Berkeley, but presented under a different aspect. It has been said, that it was held many centuries ago by sages of Hindostan, having been taught by Vyasa,

“The immortal Berkeley of that elder age.”

Were this so, it would be, perhaps, the most remarkable phenomenon in the history of opinions. We do not, I think, perceive any thing that approaches to so acute and powerful an exercise of intellect in Grecian philosophy.

But it may be doubted, whether the Indian doctrine was coincident with that of Berkeley, or arrived at by a similar process of reasoning. It was, perhaps, one form, the most comprehensive, of the doctrine of the emanation of beings from the Divine Substance. This doctrine, which has been elsewhere so prevalent, appears to have been fundamental in the different forms of the theology of India. It necessarily implies the materiality of the Divine Substance in our sense of the word *materiality*. There was nothing, therefore, incongruous in the supposition, that matter, as well as all finite minds, emanated from the Deity. Accordingly, matter may have been regarded as not self-subsistent; as not a substance distinct from the Deity, but as the substance of the Deity himself; and as not what it appears to be, but as “*Maya*,” or *Delusion*. There is little resemblance between this doctrine and that of Berkeley; but there is a striking coincidence between it and that of the Jewish Cabalists, according to the accounts which have been given of the latter. (See Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, Liv. IV. ch. 7. Tome IV. p. 137, seqq. Brucker, *Hist. Philosophiæ*. T. II. p. 980, seqq.)

Berkeley, in opposing popular errors, sometimes ran into contrary errors. His ardent temper led him rather to present his doctrines in opposition to what had been believed, than to show how they might be reconciled with men's previous opinions. He was not always accurate in defining his conceptions, and he is negligent in the use of language. His style has often more resemblance to that of an animated oral discussion, in which allowance is to be made for carelessness of expression and overstatement, than to the style proper for a philosophical treatise. Hence something of a paradoxical character appears

Of matter we know nothing, but that it is capable of producing in us sensations and perceptions. These we refer to something external as their cause, because we are conscious that they are not produced by any thing within us.

But of this external being we know nothing except through its powers, — its powers of producing in us sensations and perceptions. Now these powers cannot be supposed intrinsic in matter considered as a substance, something existing separately, essentially distinct from spirit. Every theist who considers matter as a substance must regard its powers of affecting mind as immediately dependent on the power and will of God. It can become perceptible by us only because it is the will of God that it should be so perceived, and the will and power of God must be in constant exercise to this end; for the effect produced, being the result of his will, must cease when it is no longer his will that it should exist. The effect, likewise, must be solely the result of his will, as this alone would necessarily pro-

throughout his writings, and propositions are to be found, in which he evidently asserts more than he intended, or, at least, more than he would defend. But he is preëminent as an original thinker. In this respect, in moral worth as a man, and in entire honesty of purpose as a writer, he was well qualified to be a follower of the great founder of metaphysical science. He wanted, indeed, what Locke possessed, that calm comprehensiveness of mind, that capacity of viewing a subject in all its relations both to absolute truth and to the opinions existing concerning it, that consequent ability to accommodate and ally what he taught to conceptions already held, and that familiar perspicuity of language, which constitute a union of the highest excellences in a philosopher, — but which are apt to deceive an unreflecting reader, and to make him feel as if the thoughts were such as with a little effort might have occurred to himself. But, after every deduction which we may be compelled to make from the praise of Berkeley, his name will remain one of the great names in the literature of the world, and one of those most deserving of honor.

duce it, and consequently excludes the supposition of any other power, any power intrinsic in matter, as a partial cause of it. Our perceptions, then, are the immediate result of the will and power of God. If his will were not exerted to produce them, a spiritual being might traverse the material universe without becoming acquainted with its existence. And on the other hand, supposing matter not to exist as a substance, the present perceptions and sensations of all minds would, notwithstanding, still exist, were it the will of God that they should.

Our perceptions, then, are the result of the will and power of God in immediate action. They are produced by his power, not by any power intrinsic in matter considered as a substance. Matter is only a mode in which the Deity displays his power.

Strictly speaking, power cannot be ascribed to an unconscious substance, a being without volition. That cannot, properly, be considered as the power of any being, which is not exercised at its volition, nor is in any degree under its control. Power, therefore, the ability to cause that to be which did not before exist, is not to be ascribed to matter considered as a substance. Our perceptions, which are the result of some external power, cannot be referred to matter, so considered, as their cause. They must be regarded as produced by the operation of the Divine Mind.

The attributes of matter, that is, its powers of producing in us sensations and perceptions, are all of which our senses give us evidence. Besides them, nothing can be known, or conceived; or imagined of matter. The question, then, is, Whether these powers are to be referred to an inconceivable and unimaginable being, or to another being without us, the Deity, whom we believe to be perfectly adequate to produce all the effects which we experience. Nor, upon examination, will even this appear a question; for, when we intro-

duce matter as a substance, it serves in no way to solve the phenomena presented; it can have no intrinsic power to produce them, nor can we even conceive of any instrumental agency which it may have in their production.

To the immediate agency of the Deity in all that we feel and perceive may be objected the nature of many of our sensations and perceptions. To this it is to be answered, that their true nature is not to be estimated by the manner in which a finite being is temporarily affected by them, nor conformably to his imperfect views and partial judgments. The doctrine that God is the creator of all things, or the doctrine that he is everywhere present, is liable to the same class of objections, from the false and incongruous associations with his character to which either may accidentally lead, as the doctrine of his agency in producing all sensations and perceptions.

Admitting the truth of this doctrine, all material things become to us only one vast display of the power of God, in immediate action, and inexhaustibly varied in its operations. The universe consists of finite spirits embosomed in the Infinite Spirit. Matter ceases to be the veil, and becomes the manifestation of God. We are continually in his visible presence, so far as we can, in any case, speak of the visible presence of Him who is to be perceived by any finite being only through the displays of his power. In the strongest and most literal sense of the words, we are living, moving, and having our being in Him. And when with this belief is united a conviction of his unmingled goodness, no state of mind would seem more favorable to devotion, to habitual reference to Him, and consequently to the moral perfection of our nature.

NOTE B.

(See p. 151.)

ON BASILIDES AND THE BASILIDIANS.

BASILIDES and his proper followers seem to have constituted a small sect of theosophic Gnostics, which owed its distinction principally to its early existence; and to the talents and the writings of its founder and of his son Isidore. With their writings Clement of Alexandria was acquainted. He gives various quotations from them, and comments on the doctrines taught in them. But they do not appear to have been consulted by Irenæus, nor by any other of the ancient writers who profess to give accounts of the heretical sects. From Clement, therefore, we must gather almost all the information concerning the doctrines of the proper Basilidians, on which we can rely with any confidence. The peculiarities which they derived from their founder probably soon melted away; and the members of the sect appear to have become either pseudo-Christians, or semi-Christians, on the one side, or to have been confounded with the great body of the Valentinians, on the other.

Basilides, like the Valentinians, held the doctrine of a primitive Ogdoad, composed of the Supreme Being, and seven derivative Æons,* which he doubtless regarded, in common with the Valentinians, as the source of all other beings.† He appears to have thought as honorably as the Valentinians of the Creator and Ruler of the material uni-

* Clement. Al. Stromat. IV. § 25. p. 637.

† See before, p. 124.

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verse.* He held the common doctrine of the theosophic Gnostics, that certain individuals are elect through their spiritual nature.† He held the Platonic doctrine of the pre-existence and transmigration of souls.‡ He regarded the passions as evil spirits attached to the rational soul through some original disorder and confusion;§ — referring, probably, to that original disorder and confusion, resulting from the mingling of the spiritual with the material, which appears in the systems of the other theosophic Gnostics, as giving birth to the material universe. He believed our Lord to have had a real body, capable of suffering,|| though probably, like the Valentinians, he did not suppose it to have been a body of flesh and blood.

Enough has been formerly said,|| to show that Basilides did not teach immorality. But it may be further remarked, that he held a doctrine of extraordinary rigor. He contended that even sins committed before becoming a Christian were not pardoned, with the exception of involuntary sins and sins of ignorance.** In connection with this, he further maintained that all suffering was the punishment of sin; and that even martyrdom was only a more honorable punishment, either for actual sin, or, at least, for a tendency to sin which had not shown itself in action.†† Clement quotes his words to this effect; and adds, what in itself is

* Stromat. II. § 8. pp. 448, 449. Stromat. IV. § 12. p. 600.

† Stromat. II. § 3. p. 433. Stromat. IV. § 13. p. 603. Stromat. V. § 1. pp. 644, 645.

‡ Stromat. IV. § 12. p. 600. Origen. Comment. in Ep. ad Romanos, Lib. V. Opp. IV. 549.

§ Stromat. II. § 20. pp. 487, 488.

|| Stromat. IV. § 12. p. 600. Conf. Stromat. I. § 21. pp. 407, 408. Doctrina Orientalis, § 16. p. 972.

¶ See Vol. II. p. 130.

** Stromat. IV. § 24. p. 634.

†† Stromat. IV. § 12. pp. 599, 600.

not improbable, though it does not appear in the quotations which he gives, that Basilides considered sins committed in a preëxistent state as causes of present suffering.

Basilides supposes that it may be urged by an objector, that such or such a person suffered without being a sinner. To this he replies, — "With permission I will say, that he had not committed sin, but was like an infant who suffers," that is, on account of a tendency to sin, as he has before explained himself. "But if you urge the matter still farther, I will say, that whomever you may name, he is a man, but that God is just. Now, no man, as has been said, is pure from stain." "I will say any thing," he has before observed, "rather than speak evil of Providence."*

By that God who is just, and of whose providence he will not speak evil, it would seem that Basilides intended the Creator, or the immediate god of the material universe, whom the Gnostics generally affirmed to be *just*. Clement considers his words in the passage I have quoted as referring directly to our Lord considered as a man, and as meaning, "Whomever you may name, he is a man"; "now, no man," not even Jesus who suffered, "is pure from stain." The words certainly have that appearance. In common with other theosophists, Basilides distinguished, we may presume, between the man Jesus and the proper Saviour, who descended into him from the Pleroma, and left him at his crucifixion; and if so, there may seem little doubt that he is here speaking of the sufferings of Jesus.

Maintaining such a doctrine, Basilides was represented, not unfairly, as detracting from the honor of the martyrs, and discouraging that bold profession of the truth which might lead to suffering. It was said, also, that his principles caused men to deny their faith, and to sacrifice to the heath-

* Stromat. IV. § 12. p. 600.

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en gods.* They may have had this effect upon some of his followers.†

Clement describes him as "deifying the Devil, while daring to speak of the Lord as a sinful man."‡ Upon this, and some other evidence not more decisive, Basilides has been represented as holding the Persian doctrine, that the mixture of good and evil in the world is the result of the struggle between two antagonist principles, one good and the other evil, and as having thus been a precursor of Manichæus. But I suppose that his doctrine was not essentially different from that held by the Gnostics generally, and by many of the heathen philosophers, including Plato. In common with them, Basilides believed in an evil principle resident in matter.

SUCH, I conceive, is the amount of all the authentic information that remains concerning the leading doctrines of Basilides and his proper followers. But Irenæus has a short account of him,§ which appears to have formed the basis of the accounts of the subsequent historians of heresy in ancient times. Irenæus, however, neither directly nor indirectly refers to any authority for his assertions; and those assertions, considered as relating to Basilides or to such as might properly be called Basilidians, are intrinsically improbable, and, at the same time, irreconcilable with the notices of Clement. Irenæus professedly gives the doctrines of Basilides; but, as I have had repeated occasion to remark, sects were designated by the name of their founder; and those doctrines, I presume, were doctrines which he sup-

* Origen. Comment. in Matt. Opp. III. 856, 857. Conf. Irenæus, Lib. I. c. 24 § 5. pp. 101, 102.

† See Vol. II. p. 130.

‡ Stromat. IV. § 12. p. 601.

§ Lib. I. c. 24. §§ 3-7. pp. 101, 102. Conf. Lib. II. c. 16. § 2. p. 137.

posed to be held by certain persons called Basilidians, and which, in consequence, he probably thought to have been derived from Basilides.

Irenæus, instead of the Ogdoad of Æons ascribed by Clement to Basilides, represents him as having taught that there were six primary Æons only. From the last two of these Æons, he says, that, according to Basilides, there proceeded "Powers, Princes, and Angels, whom he calls the First, and that by them the first heaven was made." From these other beings emanated, who formed a new heaven; and others again from them, who formed a third; and so on in succession, till three hundred and sixty-five heavens were formed, each the antitype of its predecessor. "On this account the year has three hundred and sixty-five days, corresponding to the number of the heavens." "And they distribute," says Irenæus, "the local positions of those heavens in like manner as the astronomers. For, receiving their theorems, they conform them to their own doctrine." It seems impossible to determine what correspondence, in the arrangement of three hundred and sixty-five heavens, Irenæus intended to indicate as existing between the astronomers and the Basilidians. But perhaps he had some meaning less strange than that which the words of his Latin Translator appear to present. Irenæus further says, that Basilides taught, that "the angels" who formed the last heaven were also the makers of this world.

Had Basilides held so extraordinary a doctrine as that which Irenæus reports concerning the three hundred and sixty-five heavens, it seems likely that it would have attracted the notice of Clement; but Clement does not mention it nor refer to it. On the contrary, he says that Basilides affirmed that but a single world had been produced.* It is

* — *μονογενῇ τε κόσμον, ὡς φησὶν ὁ Βασιλείδης.* Stromat. V. § 11. p. 690.

a doctrine that we are unable to connect with any opinions which may have suggested it or led the way to it. But, at the same time, we cannot say with confidence, that it may not have been held by certain persons, whom, for some reason or other, Irenæus considered as followers of Basilides.

Irenæus ascribes to Basilides another very strange doctrine. He says, that, according to him, the first emanation of the Father, Intellect, descended from the Pleroma in order to deliver such as might believe in him from the power of the Makers of the World. He was called both Christ and Jesus. He did not suffer on the cross; but Simon the Cyrenian, who was compelled to bear his cross, was crucified in his stead. He, as an incorporeal power, took what form he would,* and upon this occasion assumed the form of Simon,—imposing, as is implied, his own form upon Simon,—and stood by laughing at his persecutors, while Simon suffered.

The story of Irenæus, if credible of any individuals, is not credible of any Christians; and in regard to Basilides is entirely set aside by the charge of Clement against him, that he believed that Jesus, like others, suffered in consequence of his sins, or of his tendency to sin;—a charge which, considering Clement's acquaintance with the writings of Basilides, proves that he held no such doctrine as that ascribed to him by Irenæus. What foundation for the story of Irenæus there may have been in the opinions of any pseudo-Christians or heretics, it is impossible to say; but some foundation it probably had. For, as we are informed by Sale, in one of his notes on the Koran, "it is the constant doctrine of the Mohammedans, that it was not Jesus himself who was crucified, but somebody else in his shape and re-

* See before, p. 177, seqq.

semblance. The person crucified some will have to be a spy that was sent to entrap him; others, that it was one Titian, who, by the direction of Judas, entered in at a window of the house where Jesus was, to kill him; and others, that it was Judas himself.* This doctrine is plainly expressed in the Koran. "The Jews," it is there said, "slew not Jesus, neither crucified him; but he was represented by one in his likeness."†

One other subject relating to those whom Irenæus called Basilidians requires explanation. They gave, it is said, to "their Prince" the name of Abraxas or Abrasax. Who this "Prince" was is not defined by Irenæus or Theodoret.‡ The Author of the Addition to Tertullian,§ and Epiphanius,|| represent him as the Supreme Divinity. But their authority is of no worth. The numerical value of the Greek letters composing either name is three hundred and sixty-five, and the names are supposed to have been formed to express this value.

There are to be found in different cabinets in Europe a large number of engraved stones, evidently of Egyptian

* Sale's Koran, I. 60.

† Ibid. pp. 112, 113. — Long after the composition of the Koran, Photius says that he found the story in a book mentioned before (pp. 179, 180, note) as quoted by him, called "The Circuits of the Apostles." Photii Bibliotheca, col. 292.

‡ Irenæus says, "Esse autem Principem illorum 'Αβράξας." As he has just been speaking of the three hundred and sixty-five heavens of his supposed Basilidians, "illorum" appears at first view to refer to them. But Theodoret, in his account of the Basilidians, evidently copied that of Irenæus, and, in a passage unconnected with any mention of those heavens, he says, Εἶναι δὲ τὸν Ἀρχοντα αὐτῶν φησὶν Ἀβραράξ. (Hæret. Fab. Lib. I. n. 4. Opp. IV. 195.) Here by αὐτῶν he must have intended the Basilidians.

§ De Præscript. Hæretic. c. 46. p. 219.

|| Hæres. XXIV. §§ 7, 8. pp. 73, 74.

origin, and bearing figures and inscriptions relating to the mythology of Egypt.* A comparatively very small number have upon them the name Abrasax.† This name being equivalent to Abraxas, they have hence all been denominated "Abraxas gems," or "Abraxas stones"; and there has been a popular error, which is not yet wholly extinct, though it can be held by no one who has paid any proper attention to the subject, that these stones, generally, were wrought for the use of the Basilidians. This error runs through the account given of them by Montfaucon in his "Antiquité Expliquée." But it is evident, from a mere inspection of the great number of figures which he has published, that they are generally of heathen origin, and bear no trace of any relation to Christianity. This fact has been fully illustrated by Beausobre‡ and Lardner.§ As those writers, however, suppose, there may be among these stones some which were wrought for pseudo-Christians.

In regard to the use of the name Abrasax, the most probable conjecture is, that it is found on these heathen gems as a name of the Sun, considered as ruling over the three hundred and sixty-five days of the year. From the heathens it may have been borrowed by some pseudo-Christian

* Montfaucon has treated of these gems in the second volume of his "Antiquité Expliquée," and given numerous engravings of them.

† On one of the stones published by Montfaucon (Plate 49, No. 6), the name is spelt "Abraxat." (The Author of the Addition to Tertullian, according to the text in Le Prieur's edition, gives the name "Abraxat.") On others (as Plate 49, No. 30, Plate 51, Nos. 35, 36), it is spelt "Abraxas." According to either spelling, the numerical value of the letters would not amount to 365. I have not observed any one on which it is spelt "Abraxas."

‡ Histoire du Manichéisme, II. 50, seqq.

§ History of the Heretics, Ch. II. Section 16, seqq. Works (4to. 1815), Vol. IV. p. 545, seqq.

or heretical Gnostics to denote the Creator, whom they regarded as having his residence in the Sun, or as the informing genius of the Sun.* Such may have been the origin of the story respecting its use by those called Basilidians.†

* See before, pp. 22, 162, 163. According to Porphyry, as quoted by Eusebius (*Præparat. Evang. Lib. III. c. 4. p. 93*), the Egyptians considered the Sun as the Creator or Architect of the world. This correspondence of opinion with the Gnostics might give further occasion for transferring the enigmatical name of the Sun, Abrasax, to the Gnostic Creator.

† We have repeatedly had occasion to see what difficulty there is in ascertaining the truth concerning the Gnostics from ancient writers, and sometimes to remark the errors of modern writers concerning them. I will here give an example of the carelessness with which their history has been written in our own times.

Matter (to whose work I have before referred), in concluding his account of Basilides and the Basilidians, mentions the immoralities into which he supposes the Basilidians to have fallen in the fourth and fifth centuries, and then proceeds thus (*Histoire Critique du Gnosticisme, Tome II. pp. 97, 98*): —

“Such was the end of a sect of theosophists, of which Clement of Alexandria had said in express words, — ‘The worship of these Gnostics consists in continual attention to the soul, in meditations on the Divinity regarded as inexhaustible love.’ [*Stromat. VII. p. 829, lin. 43. Ed. Potter.*] ‘Their science has two parts. The first relates to divine things; considers the First Cause, by which all has been made, and without which nothing exists; examines the essence of things which penetrate each other and are connected together; questions the powers of nature, and demands to what end they conduct. The second part treats of human things, of the condition of man, of what he is by nature, of what he is not, of what he must do and suffer. Here they examine the vices and the virtues, the good, the evil, and the indifferent, or those things which lie between.’ [*Ib. p. 838, lin. 8.*]

“Clement had added to these characteristics, — ‘Basilides says that the Supreme Being should be honored, not on certain days, but through the whole of life, in the whole of conduct. [*Ib. p. 851, lin. 17.*] The Gnostic prays, because he knows that prayer may have

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place everywhere, and that he is always heard.' " [Ib. p. 851, lin. 34, lin. 37, p. 852, lin. 27.]

"All these passages," says Matter, "are taken from the seventh book of the Stromata."

I have referred particularly (in brackets) to the places where they are to be found. They are translated inaccurately, but this is comparatively a fact of small importance.

In the passages adduced by Matter, Clement has no reference to Basilides or the Basilidians. On the contrary, he is speaking of the true Christian Gnostic, according to his own conception of him.

Matter says, that Clement quotes certain words of Basilides. The name of Basilides does not occur in any connection with those words. The passage said to be quoted from him is composed of fragments of different sentences of Clement himself.

It is difficult to imagine what may have been the origin of these errors. It is scarcely possible that any one should undertake to write a history of the Gnostics, without being acquainted with the fact that Clement familiarly uses the term "Gnostic," not to denote a Gnostic heretic, but an enlightened Christian. Even supposing this possible, the very connection of the passages quoted by Matter makes it evident at first sight that they have no reference to heretical Gnostics. And if, through some hallucination, any one might suppose them to have such a reference, still no reason appears why he should suppose Basilidians to have been particularly intended. Nor is it easy to divine by what mistake certain words of Clement have been put together and ascribed to Basilides.

Matter writes with a certain degree of vivacity and talent, and, considering that he is a pupil of the German school, with what may be regarded as remarkable clearness of method and meaning. But he has composed, not a history, but a romance founded on the history, of the Gnostics. His general views concerning them appear to have been rather suggested by his imagination than to have been the result of any investigation of the subject. His work is full of particular errors of the same class with those which have just been pointed out, though it cannot be supposed that many of them are equally extraordinary. Matter, however, is not the only one, among modern writers concerning the Gnostics, to whose authority if an inexperienced student defer, he may find himself following a *blind guide through the blind darkness* — "*Per le tenebre cieche un cieco duce.*"

NOTE C.

(See pp. 170 and 218.)

ON THE GOSPEL OF MARCION.

THE gospel of Marcion is represented by Irenæus and Tertullian as being a mutilated copy of the Gospel of Luke, from which that heretic had struck out passages which he could not reconcile with his doctrines. It was a book of much notoriety, and this representation proceeds from writers who must have been fully acquainted with it. They are followed by Epiphanius, who likewise shows, by his particular remarks on the book, that he had examined it throughout, and whose testimony as to the fact in question there is no reason to distrust. The fact is also alluded to by many other early writers ; as, for example, by Origen, who, in speaking of the adulteration of one of his own writings, says, — “ See how he has corrected our disputation, in the same way as Marcion corrected the Gospels.” *

But, in the last half of the last century, there sprang up in Germany an hypothesis, which for a long time obtained wide reception among the theologians of that country, namely, that the gospel of Marcion was not a mutilated copy of that of Luke, but a work derived from the same written sources with Luke's Gospel, and antecedent to it in that progressive growth of gospels which finally resulted in the production of those of Luke, Matthew, and Mark. The theory of this gradual formation of the first three Gospels

* Epist. ad Alexandrinos. Opp. I. 6. Conf. Ex Comment. in Ezechiel. Opp. III. 352, 353.

has been examined in the first volume of this work ; and if it be wholly untenable, as I trust it has appeared to be, then the opinion that has been maintained respecting Marcion's gospel, since it depends on its connection with that theory for any show of plausibility, must perish with it. This, perhaps, is all that it is necessary to say concerning the subject ; especially as the opinion has been confuted,* and, I believe, generally abandoned, in the country of its birth. But it may be more satisfactory, and not uninteresting, to enter into some explanation, and to state the proofs of what for fifteen centuries was the unquestioned belief respecting Marcion's gospel.

THE ancient testimony concerning this book is first to be attended to. Irenæus, after a brief account of Marcion's doctrines, says, — " Moreover, he mutilated the Gospel according to Luke, taking away all that is recorded of the generation of the Lord, and many parts of his discourses in which he clearly recognizes the Creator of this universe as his Father ; so that Marcion thus gave to his disciples, not the Gospel [not the whole history and doctrine of Christ], but a fragment of the Gospel, persuading them that he was better acquainted with the truth than the Apostles who have given us the Gospel." † The reason assigned by Irenæus for not undertaking a particular confutation of the Marcionites in his general work against heresies has been already quoted.‡ It occurs in connection with the passage just given, and well deserves attention in reference to our present subject : — " But because he alone has dared open-

* Particularly by Hahn, in his work entitled " *Das Evangelium Marcions in seiner ursprünglichen Gestalt*," and by Olshausen in his " *Echtheit der Evangelien erwiesen*," pp. 111-215.

† Lib. I. c. 27. § 2. p. 106.

‡ See Vol. II. p. 95.

ly to mutilate the Scriptures, and has gone beyond all others in shamelessly disparaging the character of God [the Creator], I shall oppose him by himself, confuting him from his own writings, and, with the help of God, effect his overthrow by means of those discourses of our Lord and his Apostle [St. Paul] which are respected by him and which he himself uses." * Tertullian and Epiphanius, in confuting Marcion, proposed, as we shall see, to pursue the same course of appealing only to his mutilated Gospel and his mutilated collection of St. Paul's Epistles, and of not quoting against him any portions of Scripture but those the authority of which he admitted.

There are various other passages in which Irenæus affirms the fact that Marcion's gospel was a mutilated copy of Luke's. Speaking of the Gnostics, he says : — " They have turned away in their doctrines from him who is God [the Creator], and think that they have discovered more than the Apostles, having found out another God. They maintain that the Apostles still thought with the Jews, when they announced the Gospel, but that they themselves are more pure in their belief and wiser than the Apostles. Hence Marcion and his followers have been led to mutilate the Scriptures ; some they reject altogether ; others, as the Gospel of Luke and the Epistles of Paul, they shorten, and maintain that what they have thus abridged is alone of authority. But we, in another work, with the help of God, shall confute them from those portions which they yet preserve." †

Tertullian, besides composing an entire Treatise in five Books against the Marcionites, refers to them often in his

* Lib. I. c. 27. § 4. p. 106.

† Lib. III. c. 12. § 12. p. 198. — Besides the passages above quoted, see Lib. III. c. 11. § 7. p. 190. Ibid. § 9. p. 192. Lib. III. c. 14. §§ 3, 4. p. 202.



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other writings. He uniformly represents the gospel of Marcion as a mutilated copy of that of Luke. This fact is so often brought into view by Tertullian, that it would be idle to produce at length the particular passages in which it is stated, referred to, or implied. "It is clear," he says, "that the Gospel of Luke had come down entire till the sacrilege of Marcion."* In the fourth Book of his work "Against Marcion," he proposes to confute him from his own gospel, making use of no passages of Scripture but such as were found in it. *Ex his revincendus es quæ recepisti*; "You are to be confuted," he says, "from what you have received."† This purpose he repeatedly avows, and accordingly he goes through Marcion's gospel in order, remarking on the passages which were to his purpose, and occasionally taking notice of its omissions. In another work (*De Carne Christi* ‡), he speaks of that book, in which, in replying to Marcion, he had appealed to Marcion's own gospel.§

* *Advers. Marcion. Lib. IV. c. 5. p. 416.*

† *Ibid. c. 34. p. 449.*

‡ *Cap. 7. p. 312.*

§ As I have formerly mentioned (see before, p. 220, note), Hahn has attempted the restoration of Marcion's gospel, principally from the information afforded by Tertullian and Epiphanius, and has given it in what is probably very like its original state. In other words, the Gospel of Luke has been exhibited by him with the omissions and alterations made by Marcion.

The last writer of any note who has maintained that Marcion's gospel was *not* a mutilated copy of the Gospel of Luke is Eichhorn. He contends (*Einleit. in das N. T. I. 71*, note), that Tertullian was not acquainted with Marcion's gospel. This supposition, as may appear from the statements I have made, implies great ignorance of what is to be found in Tertullian. In connection with this, Eichhorn maintains (*Ibid. pp. 67, 68*; p. 72, note), that Tertullian did not confidently hold the opinion that Marcion's gospel was derived from Luke's; and that he expresses himself with uncertainty on the subject. His main argument is founded on the concluding sentence of the following passage from Tertullian. (*Advers. Marcion. Lib. IV. c. 2. p. 414.*)

"Marcion assigns no author to his gospel; as if it were a greater

Epiphanius, like Tertullian, undertook to confute Marcion from the passages which Marcion himself retained.* He accordingly first gives a long series of such passages as he proposed to use, intermingling it with notices of omissions and of supposed or real corruptions in Marcion's gospel, as it existed in his time; and then repeats those passages, subjoining the argument or remark which he founded upon each of them. The information which he affords is, as I have before said, of such a nature, that there is no reason to distrust its essential correctness. It is evident, upon examination, that he did not copy from Tertullian, but is an independent authority; and the coincidence of their accounts of Marcion's gospel proves the correctness of both writers.†

crime to forge a title than to mangle the body of a work. And here I might plant my foot, and contend that a work is not to be received, which does not show its face, which affords no ground of reliance, and gives no promise of fidelity, by the fulness of its title, and the due announcement of its author. But I prefer to meet him at every point, and will not conceal what may be perceived from our Gospels. For, of those historians whom we possess, it appears that Marcion selected Luke for his mutilations."

"Lucam *videtur* Marcion elegisse quem cæderet." These words Eichhorn understands thus: "Marcion *seems* to have selected Luke for his mutilations"; and hence concludes that Tertullian expresses himself doubtfully. The word *videtur* is in itself ambiguous; but that it has not here the sense ascribed to it by Eichhorn is evident from what precedes the sentence in which it stands, and from the discussion that follows, in which Tertullian assumes without hesitation that Marcion did found his gospel on that of Luke,—to say nothing of all that Tertullian has elsewhere affirmed, and of all the other evidence which determines that this fact was notorious and undisputed.

* Hæres. XLII. Opp. I. 309, seqq.

† Epiphanius introduces the passages which he means to use in confuting Marcion, by saying that he had "selected from Marcion's gospel and his Apostolicon [that is, his collection of St. Paul's Epistles] a series of those passages by which he might be confuted,"—



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What reply, then, did the Marcionites make to this clear, long-continued, unhesitating statement of their opponents,

"passages in which he has foolishly retained the declarations of our Saviour and his Apostles against himself." "Some of them," he says, "Marcion corrupted by alterations; but there are others left unchanged by him, by which he may be confuted"; and Epiphanius proceeds to state what he expects to prove from the passages which he is about to produce. (pp. 310, 311.) His main purpose, and consequently the general character of the passages which he has brought together, are not only evident from the use he has made of those passages, but are explained by him over and over again in the plainest manner; so that it might seem impossible for one who has read what he has written to fall into any mistake concerning the matter. (See, in addition to what has been referred to, p. 311, C. p. 322. pp. 349, 350. p. 371. pp. 373, 374.)

But Epiphanius, in the collection of passages he has brought together, takes notice of the omissions and changes of words made in them by Marcion, or his followers; and likewise, incidentally to his main purpose, mentions several portions of Luke's Gospel which he says Marcion had expunged. These facts, I suppose, have given occasion to an erroneous Latin title (to which there is nothing corresponding in the Greek), prefixed to the passages in Petavius's edition of his Works. They are entitled "Passages of Scripture corrupted by Marcion." They should have been called "Passages retained by Marcion, from which he may be confuted."

But Eichhorn, apparently led astray by this erroneous title, and proceeding without further examination, has regarded the collection made by Epiphanius as intended for a collection of passages in which the text of Marcion varied from that of Luke, and which Epiphanius, in consequence, produced only as corruptions of Luke's text by Marcion. The mistake was partially pointed out in a review of his work, to which he adverts in a note to the second edition of his first volume. (pp. 65, 66.) The opinion of the reviewer was, "that that confused writer, Epiphanius, in giving the variations of Marcion's text, introduced among them, altogether out of place, some passages which he thought he could use for his confutation." But this fact, if true, Eichhorn contends, would not affect his conclusions.

Thus persevering in his misconception of the purpose of Epiphanius, and of the character of his citations, Eichhorn retains in his sec-

that their gospel was a mutilated copy of Luke's? From any writer of the first three centuries it does not appear that

ond edition the account of Marcion's gospel, and the whole accompanying body of extraordinary criticisms and remarks which he had founded upon that error. (See pp. 43-84. pp. 650-675, and many passages in that portion of his work which treats "Of the First Three Gospels generally.") His mistake was facilitated by the facts, that Epiphanius does mention omissions and changes in Marcion's gospel, that he does not quote with particular regard to accuracy, and that he often gives passages in an abridged form, citing a few words which he deemed sufficient to recall them to the recollection of the reader. Passages thus abbreviated Eichhorn has considered as so standing in the text of Marcion. To illustrate by a single example, Epiphanius thus quotes Luke ix. 40, 41: — "*I besought thy disciples. — They could not cast him out. — And to them, O faithless race, how long shall I be with you?*" This Eichhorn conceives to have been the reading of Marcion's gospel. Thus Epiphanius's notices of Marcion's omissions and variations, his own inaccuracies, and his abridged mode of quotation, have enabled Eichhorn to give a series of comments on many of the passages adduced, which is conformed to his fundamental mistake concerning their character, but which at the same time is full of particular oversights and errors. Still he is compelled to say (p. 55), that "Epiphanius's account of the variations in Marcion's gospel is often so defective, that it is uncertain in what they consisted."

Eichhorn has thus founded his whole discussion concerning Marcion's gospel on two essential misconceptions. Tertullian and Epiphanius are the only writers who have given particular specifications of its contents. But though Tertullian, in the fourth Book of his work "Against Marcion," professes to confute him solely from his own gospel, and goes through it for this purpose from beginning to end, commenting on a great number of passages, yet Eichhorn asserts that Tertullian had no copy of that gospel before him. He throws himself, therefore, on Epiphanius as his sole authority; and he has wholly mistaken the general purpose and character of the quotations given by Epiphanius.

It may seem as if it were scarcely worth while thus particularly to point out the errors of an individual writer. But it is to be recollected, that Eichhorn is the last able and elaborate defender of an opinion

they denied the fact. With one exception, it does not appear from any writer of any age. With this exception, the charge has come down to us without an intimation that it was contradicted.

The exception to which I refer is to be found in a work which I have formerly mentioned as an inaccurate compilation to which little credit is to be given, the *Dialogue de Rectâ Fide*.* The Marcionite who is introduced in this Dialogue is represented as saying that "there is but one Gospel, which was written by Christ"; and when it is objected to him in the form of a question, "Did the Lord himself write, that he was crucified, and rose again on the third day?" the brief answer assigned to him is: "The Apostle Paul added it."†

That in the fourth century, before which time this Dialogue was not written, a Marcionite might be found who maintained this absurd opinion is *possible*; though the implication of the writer of the Dialogue, that such was the fact, does not go far to render it probable. But it is incredible, that Marcion himself, or his followers, during the second century, should have held such an opinion. The folly of the statement assigned to the Marcionite of the fourth century, whether with or without foundation, serves only to show that no plausible history of Marcion's gospel, different from that given by his opponents, was known to his followers at that period.

We may, then, affirm that there is no evidence, that Marcion or his followers, during the first three centuries, gave

respecting Marcion's gospel long current in Germany, that he had the benefit of all the labors of his predecessors, and that this opinion was a main support of the theory of the gradual formation of the first three Gospels.

* See Vol. II. p. 39, seqq.

† Apud Origenis Opp. I. 808.

any account of the origin of his gospel different from that given by their opponents. But, if the theory which has been formed for them in modern times were true, they undoubtedly would have said what has been said for them. They would have gloried in possessing a more ancient gospel, favoring their own doctrines; of which their catholic opponents used an interpolated copy; and their opponents could not but have given abundant attention to such a claim. We should have found not a few remarks upon it in the work of Tertullian; nor is it possible that the fathers should for two centuries and a half, from Irenæus to Theodoret, have continued to repeat that Marcion's gospel was a mutilated copy of Luke's, without ever attempting to prove the fact, or noticing that the Marcionites denied it, but apparently regarding it as notorious and undisputed. The fact, then, is established not merely by the evidence of their catholic opponents, but by the circumstance, that it was not denied by the earlier Marcionites themselves, and that, if those of a later period did in fact deny it, the supposition which they brought forward is not of a character to deserve a moment's consideration.

But so far were Marcion and his followers from denying the origin assigned to their gospel, that, as I have formerly explained,* they asserted principles the express bearing of which was to justify their omission of passages in the Gospel of Luke, and their rejection of the authority of the other three Gospels. They held, that the Apostles generally, when they preached the Gospel, were under the influence of their erroneous Jewish faith. On this principle, Irenæus, as before quoted,† says, "Marcion and his followers have been led to mutilate the Scriptures." But St. Paul they regarded as much more free from Jewish prejudices than the other

* See before, p. 206, seqq.

† See before, p. xlviii.

Apostles. "Marcion," says Tertullian, "having got hold of the Epistle to the Galatians, in which St. Paul finds fault with the Apostles themselves for not walking steadily according to the truth of the Gospel, and in which also he accuses certain false Apostles of corrupting the Gospel of Christ,* endeavours to destroy the reputation of those Gospels which are truly such, and have come forth under the names of Apostles or Apostolic men, in order that he may transfer to his own the credit which he takes from them."† In representing the Apostles and first teachers of Christianity as having fallen into anti-Gnostic errors through their Jewish prejudices, the doctrine of Marcion was the same as that of other Gnostics. On this ground other Gnostics refused to assent throughout to the authority of their writings, and especially to defer to all their representations of the teaching of Christ as contained in the Gospels.‡ Marcion, with the boldness which appears to have belonged to his character, proceeded a step farther, and struck out the passages, the authority of which he did not admit, from the gospel which he prepared for his followers. Nor, after rejecting any appeal to the other three Gospels, was it strange that he should thus free himself from those passages in the Gospel of Luke which he regarded as objectionable.

It is obvious, from the preceding statements, that, in the charge which the Marcionites brought against the Apostles of holding certain Jewish errors, they clearly implied their belief that those errors were to be found in the Gospels as originally written.

The mutilation of Luke's Gospel, which is ascribed to

* Galatians, ch. ii.

† *Advers. Marcionem*, Lib. IV. c. 3. p. 414. *Conf. De Præscript. Hæretic.* cap. 22 - 24, pp 209, 210.

‡ See before, pp. 206 - 210.

Marcion, so far from being a disputable or disputed fact, was, as is stated by Tertullian, continued by his followers. It was not simply a fact which had taken place; it was a process which was still going on. "They daily remodel their gospel," says Tertullian, "as they are daily confuted by us";* — that is, from passages which Marcion had suffered to remain. The followers of Marcion continued to practise on the principles of their master.

But still more, Marcion himself not only remodelled the Gospel of Luke, he extended the same process of mutilation to the Epistles of Paul. As respects these Epistles, equally with Luke's Gospel, Irenæus, Tertullian, and Epiphanius profess their design of confuting him from the passages he retained. Speaking of the Epistle to the Romans, Tertullian says: — "What holes Marcion has made, particularly in that Epistle, by taking away at his pleasure, will appear from comparing it with our entire copy. Those passages which he did not see were to be erased — his negligences and oversights — will be sufficient for me";† that is, will afford sufficient materials for a confutation of his doctrines. It is unnecessary to quote the other passages to the same purpose, and the particular specifications of the charge, which might be produced from Tertullian and Epiphanius. In regard to Marcion's gospel and Luke's, it has been pretended, as we have seen, that they were two different gospels; but, as it could not be pretended that there were originally two different sets of St. Paul's Epistles, resort has been had to an hypothesis, that the discrepancies between those of the Marcionites and those of the catholic

* *Advers. Marcion. Lib. IV. c. 5, p. 416.* It may, perhaps, be worth remarking, that a similar charge is brought against the Marcionites in the Dialogue *de Rectâ Fide*, p. 867.

† *Advers. Marcion. Lib. V. c. 13. p. 477.*

Christians were only various readings. But this hypothesis is as little plausible, when applied to the differences between these two sets of the Epistles, as it would have been, if applied to the differences between the Gospel of Luke and the gospel of Marcion. The latter books might with as much likelihood have been represented as copies of the same work, differing from each other not through intentional changes, but only through accidental various readings. The solution which has been offered of the discrepancies between the copies of St. Paul's Epistles used by the Marcionites and those used by the catholic Christians necessarily implies that his Epistles had been most negligently transcribed till toward the middle of the second century, and that, at this time, all the copies in which were the gross omissions resulting from this negligence happened to fall into the hands of the Marcionites; but that the catholic Christians, having in their possession the more perfect copies, ceased, at that period, to be so negligent in their transcription, and perpetuated them correctly, so that the extraordinary various readings which then existed have disappeared from the copies now extant. Yet this solution is required as a prop for the modern hypothesis respecting Marcion's gospel, to prevent it from at once falling to the ground. For no one who believes that he mutilated the Epistles of St. Paul will be persuaded that he did not mutilate the Gospel of Luke.

As I have before observed, the modern hypothesis respecting Marcion's gospel is essentially connected with the theory of the gradual formation of the first three Gospels. There was such a correspondence between Marcion's gospel and Luke's, that it admits of no dispute, that Luke's must have been an enlargement of Marcion's or Marcion's a mutilation of Luke's. But the former supposition is not only exposed to all those objections which bear against the

theory of the gradual formation of the first three Gospels, but to others which are peculiar to it. The passages, so far as we are informed concerning them, found in Luke's Gospel and not in Marcion's, are such as must have been particularly obnoxious to the Marcionites. But if the author of Luke's Gospel took that afterwards used by Marcion as the substance of his own, it is scarcely credible that all or a great majority of those passages which he added should have happened to bear this character. Nor can we readily believe, that, if he had so easily furnished himself with the principal material for his book, he would have commenced it with a false statement respecting his own diligent inquiries, which must have been very liable to detection.

THERE appears, then, to be no reasonable doubt, that, according to the uniform testimony of antiquity, Marcion's gospel was a mutilated copy of Luke's. To the inferences which follow from this fact we have already attended.*

The contrary hypothesis is one of many, tending to shake the credit of the Gospels, which since the latter part of the last century have appeared in German theology. In this, and in some other instances, we have seen, in the course of the present work, on what foundations those hypotheses have rested. The most specious of their number, so far as they existed in his day, were embodied by Eichhorn in his writings; and no modern German theologian has excelled him in clearness of purpose and statement. So far as regards his modes of thought, reasoning, and expression, he wrote as other scholars had been accustomed to write. We have had occasion to take some notice of his oversights and negligences.

But there is much in German theology far more extraor-

* See before, particularly pp. 303 - 305.

dinary than any thing to be found in the writings of Eichhorn. Even in his day, Paulus had published his "Commentary on the Gospels," the main design of which is to prove, that, though the accounts contained in them of the miracles of our Saviour were founded on facts, and are essentially true, yet those facts were natural events, having nothing of a miraculous character. This system of interpretation was for a long time current in Germany; and one might have thought that common sense could not be further outraged. But the lowest degradation of intellect had not been reached. A writer of the present day, Strauss, has gained much notoriety by a work entitled "The Life of Jesus," the purpose of which is to maintain, that the accounts of Jesus in the Gospels are *mythical*, as he calls them, by which he means fabulous; that nothing is certainly known of his true history, but that, having been mistaken for the Jewish Messiah, the fabulous accounts of him contained in the Gospels (which were founded principally on traditions and popular notions concerning the expected Messiah) had their origin, for the most part, among the Jewish people in the interval between his death and the destruction of Jerusalem, became connected with his name, and clouded over all the real events of his life. It is, of course, impossible that so brief an account should give the impression produced by the work itself. It is a work which to one unacquainted with German speculation may exhibit the human mind under a new aspect, and cause a strange feeling of wonder at the entire incapacity which it exhibits of taking a comprehensive and correct view of a subject, or of estimating what is probable or possible, connected with much pretension, a degree of superficial acuteness, and the power of writing two thick volumes. But this is not the most remarkable fact respecting it. Though, putting aside every other consideration, it might seem adapted to repel the great body

of readers by its heaviness and wearisome diffuseness, yet the third edition of it is now lying before me; and it has also been translated into French, to furnish a knowledge of Christianity to a people who are in general so mournfully ignorant of it.* But in Germany one folly has of late been continually thrusting out another; and we may readily believe what Strauss affirms, that the fashion of explaining miracles as natural events, which was so long prevalent, has fallen into disrepute; and that he undertook his work, because it appeared to him to be time to substitute a new mode of considering the Gospels, in place of the obsolete expositions of the Supernaturalists and the Naturalists.

* Since the present volume was first published, an English translation of Strauss's work has appeared, made from the fourth German edition. — *Note to 2d Edition*, 1848.

NOTE D.

(See p. 175.)

ON THE USE OF THE WORDS ΘΕΟΙΣ AND DEUS.

In rendering the words *θεοί* and *deus* in this and in a former work,* I have repeatedly wished to explain my views of their signification and use; and on the last occasion which presented itself in the present volume, I determined to make a few remarks on the subject.

In order to a right apprehension of the theology either of the ancient Heathens or of the early Christians, the signification and use of those words must be understood. But I am not aware that any account has been given of them which will satisfactorily solve one very common phenomenon in the writings of the ancient heathen philosophers. I refer to the fact, that throughout their writings the words are used in the plural and in the singular number indiscriminately. The solution of this fact involves the most important explanation required of their signification and use. The following passage from Cicero † is an example of what has been mentioned : —

“ Qui deos esse concedant, iis fatendum est, eos aliquid agere, idque præclarum. Nihil est autem præclarior mundi administratione; deorum igitur consilio administratur. Quod si aliter est, aliquid profecto sit necesse est melius, et majore vi præditum, quàm deos, quale id cumque est, sive inanima natura, sive necessitas vi magnâ incitata, hæc pulcherrima

* Statement of Reasons.

† De Naturâ Deorum, Lib. II. § 30.

opera efficiens, quæ videmus. Non est igitur natura deorum præpotens, neque excellens, si quidem ea subjecta est ei vel necessitati, vel naturæ, quâ cælum, maria, terræque regantur. Nihil autem est præstantius deo; ab eo igitur necesse est mundum regi; nulli igitur est naturæ obediens aut subjectus deus; omnem ergo regit ipse naturam. Etenim, si concedimus intelligentes esse deos, concedimus etiam providentes."

This passage is thus translated by Francklin: —

"If we acknowledge there are gods, we must believe they are employed, and that in something excellent; nothing is so excellent as the administration of the universe; it is therefore governed by the wisdom of the gods. Otherwise we must imagine there is some cause superior to the deity, whether it be a nature inanimate, or a necessity agitated by a mighty force, that produces those beautiful works which we behold. The nature of the gods would then be neither supreme nor excellent, if you subject it to that necessity, or to that nature, by which you would make the heaven, the earth, and the seas to be governed. But there is nothing superior to the deity; the world therefore must be governed by him; consequently the deity is under no obedience or subjection to any nature, but rules all nature himself. In effect, if we allow the gods have understanding, we allow also their providence."

It is evident that this rendering must be erroneous. The sense which it gives is incongruous. There is an entire confusion of ideas in thus passing forwards and backwards from the gods to the Deity and from the Deity to the gods, and in ascribing to both the same characteristics. But the occurrence of passages like that quoted from Cicero is common in the ancient heathen philosophers. That we may correctly understand them, two facts are to be attended to.

The first is, that the signification of the terms *θεοί* and

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deus, as used by heathen writers, was very different from that of our word "God." The latter is, in its primary meaning, a *proper name*, confined to the Supreme Being. The Greek or Latin term which we translate "god" was, on the other hand, a *common name*, equally applicable to a very large class of beings.

The second consideration is, that common names are used in the singular number, not merely to denote an individual belonging to the class which they designate, but the whole class, or individuals of that class considered in reference to qualities common to the class. In such cases the singular may be changed into the plural without any change of meaning. As, for example : —

" God made the country and man made the town."

That is, " men made towns " or built cities.

" Is it for thee the linnet pours his throat ? "

Is it for thee that linnets sing ?

" Loves of his own and raptures swell his note (his notes)."

" Who for thy table feeds the wanton fawn (fawns),
For him (them) as kindly spreads the flowering lawn (lawns)."

" In the same temple, the resounding wood,
All vocal beings hymned their equal God."

In temples of the same kind, the resounding woods.

" Thus beast and bird (beasts and birds) their common charge attend ;
The mothers nurse them, and the sires defend."

Here, in the last line, the same sense might be expressed by the use of the nouns in the singular number : —

The mother nurses and the sire defends.

" The lion inhabits (lions inhabit) both Africa and Asia."

I give a few short examples, such as may be easily detached from their connection, merely for the sake of illustration. Instances of this use of language are of continual occurrence.

It is by this use of common names in the singular number with a plural signification, that such passages as that quoted from Cicero are to be explained. *Deus*, as used by him in the singular, does not mean the Deity or God. It denotes the class of beings called "gods." Where "the deity" is used in the translation I have quoted from Francklin, we shall give the true meaning of the original by substituting "the gods." The whole passage will thus become coherent.

The most striking analogy in our own language to this use of the names *θεός* and *deus* in the ancient languages is found in the use of the name "man"; because this name, like the two former, denotes a class of intelligent beings. The word "man" is very commonly used in the singular number with a plural meaning. As, for example : —

"A part how small of the terraqueous globe
Is tenanted by man !"

"Consider man as mortal, all is dark."

"Man shall be blest as far as man permits."

The singular and plural consequently may be used interchangeably, as in the following passage : —

"To faith and virtue why so backward man ?
From hence : — The present strongly strikes us all ;
The future faintly. Can we, then, be men ?
If men, Lorenzo, the reverse is right.
Reason is man's peculiar, sense the brute's.
The present is the scanty realm of sense ;
The future, reason's empire unconfined."

As in our language, the word "man" in the singular



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number is used to denote men generally, so in the Greek and Latin languages, the words *θεός* and *deus* are used in the singular with a like plural signification, to denote the gods generally, considered as a class of intelligent beings superior to man.*

As this use of *θεός* and *deus* in the singular with a plural signification has not been commonly remarked, it may be worth while to illustrate it by a few more examples. In the conclusion of the first Book of Cicero's work "On the Nature of the Gods," Cotta thus reasons against the doctrines of Epicurus : —

"Disinterested love and friendship are qualities of men. How much more, then, are they qualities of the gods (*deorum*)! They, though in want of nothing, love each other, and consult for the good of men. If it be not so, why do we venerate, why do we pray to the gods (*deos*)? Epicurus takes away the gods (*deos*) in reality, and leaves them in words. If the gods are truly such that they have no favor and no love for men, let them go. For why should I say, 'May the gods be propitious'? (*Si maxime talis est deus, ut nullâ gratiâ, nullâ hominum caritate teneatur, valeat. Quid enim dicam, Propitius sit?*)" †

To one of the statements of Balbus in the same work Cotta thus objects : —

* There is a peculiarity of our language, in the use of the word "man," which deserves notice. In the Greek, in the English, and in other modern languages, which have the definite article, it is a general rule, that the article should be prefixed to common names, when used in the singular to denote a class of beings; but our word "man," when thus used, always rejects it, — except some discriminating epithet be connected with it which limits its application to a particular class of men. In the latter case, it falls under the general rule; as we may say, "the virtuous man," meaning "virtuous men."

† Lib. I. § 44.

“ ‘The gods (*dii*),’ he says, ‘do not take notice of all offences any more than kings.’ What resemblance is there between the two cases? For if kings knowingly pass over crimes, it is a great fault. But the gods have not the excuse of ignorance. (*At deo ne excusatio quidem est inscientiæ.*) You give a notable defence of them, when you say, that such is the power of the gods (*Quem*—i. e. *quem deum*—*vos præclare defenditis, cum dicitis eam esse vim deorum*), that if any one should escape by death the punishment of a crime, yet it would be required of his children, his grandchildren, his posterity. O wonderful equity of the gods (*deorum*) ! ” *

Cicero says, in his work “On Laws”:—†

“The first ground of fellowship between man and the gods is reason (*Prima homini cum deo rationis societas*), which belongs both to man and the gods (*est in homine et in deo*). But as reason is common to both, so also is right reason. And as this is a law, we are to be regarded as further associated with the gods by subjection to a law (*lege quoque consociati cum diis putandi sumus*).”

In this example, we find the words *homo* and *deus* connected together, both with the same plural sense, as denoting the individuals of a class.

I had thought of adding at length some other examples, as one from the *Memorabilia* of Socrates,‡ where Socrates is urging on Aristodemus the worship of the gods, and maintaining their existence and providence, and where, after using the name *θεοί* throughout the preceding part of the discourse in the plural, he passes to the use of *θεός* in the singular, and speaks of *τὸν τοῦ θεοῦ ὀφθαλμόν* and *τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ φρόνησιν*, but returns immediately to the plural form;—and

* Lib. III. §§ 37, 38. † *De Legibus*, Lib. I. § 7. ‡ Lib. I. c. 4.

another from the first sentences of Plutarch's treatise "Of Isis and Osiris," which have been remarked for the indiscriminate use of *θεός* in the singular and the plural. But further examples are not necessary for the illustration of the use which has been pointed out of *θεός* and *deus* in the singular number; and are not required in proof of it, since any one whose attention is directed to the subject may find such examples in abundance.

FROM overlooking this use of those words, they have, when occurring in the singular number in ancient heathen writers, been often misunderstood as intended to denote the Supreme Being. "Nothing is more frequent with pagan writers," says Cudworth, "than to speak of *God* singularly, they signifying thereby the one Supreme Deity."* — "The Pagans did not only signify the Supreme God by these proper names [*Zeús, Jupiter, &c.*], but also frequently by the appellatives themselves, when used, not for a god in general, but for the God, or God *κατ' ἐξοχήν*, and by way of eminency. And thus *ὁ θεός* and *θεός* are often taken by the Greeks, not for *θεῶν τις*, a god or one of the gods, but for *God* or the *Supreme Deity*."† It appears, that Cudworth regarded *θεός*, when used in the singular number, as having no other power than to denote an individual, either a god or God; and concluded, therefore, that, when it did not refer to some heathen god, it must denote the Supreme Being. But, so far as a belief in a plurality of gods exists, *θεός* must be a common name. Like other common names, therefore, it can refer to any one particular being, only through some circumstance accompanying its use which determines its reference to that being. It is true that those heathen philoso-

* Intellectual System, Ch. IV. § 27. p. 453.

† Ibid. § 14. p. 260.

phers before Christianity, who had a conception of one Supreme Power, answering more or less to our conception of God, applied to that Power the terms *θεός*, and *deus*; but not nakedly and unexplained. They did so by means of some discriminating epithet, as when Cicero says, that man was produced *a summo deo*, "by the Supreme God"; or by using the terms in such a connection as left no uncertainty about their reference, as when Plato, in his *Timæus*, gives to the Creator of All Things, who is evidently the subject of his discourse, the appellation of *ὁ θεός*; and as Aristotle, after describing the Prime Mover of the Universe, continues to speak of him under the same appellation.* There are, perhaps, other cases in which the circumstance determining the reference is less obvious; but some circumstance there must have been; for *θεός* and *deus*, being common names, could denote a particular being only when that being was in some way brought before the mind of the reader.

But a grosser error than that on which I have just remarked has been the translating of the words *θεοί* and *δii*, in the plural, by the proper name "God" or "the Deity." It is an error so obvious and so indefensible, that it is unnecessary to remark upon it. Yet it has been a common one. It occurs, for instance, in Francklin's Translation (which I have quoted) of Cicero's work "On the Nature of the Gods," and even Cudworth himself has fallen into it.

"It is no unusual thing," says Leland, "for Christian writers, in their quotations from heathen authors, to produce passages relating to the gods, as a proof that the Heathens acknowledged the government and attributes of the Deity in the Christian sense."†

* *Metaphysic. Lib. XIV. c. 7.*

† Leland's *Advantage and Necessity of the Christian Revelation*, Part I. Ch. 14. note *e*. See also note *g*. In these notes Leland gives examples of writers who have committed this error.

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BESIDES the facts which have been mentioned respecting the signification of *θεός* and *deus* as used by ancient heathen writers, another is to be attended to. Those words had a very wide application. When we think of the heathen gods, our first conception is of a class of beings resembling men, though considered as far superior, all of whom were respectively entitled to the common appellation "god." But this appellation was extended much farther, to beings not having a personal existence, to irrational and inanimate things; to virtues and vices; to events, as to Victory; and to passions, affections, powers, and other attributes. To take an enumeration given by Le Clerc, "The Romans had temples of Intellect, Virtue, Honor, Piety, Fidelity, Hope, Modesty, Concord, Peace, Quiet, Safety, Felicity, and Liberty."* "Let there be shrines," says Cicero in his imaginary system of laws, "in honor of those qualities by which man ascends to heaven,—Intellect, Virtue, Piety, Fidelity."† "They all have temples dedicated to them at Rome; and it is well that they should be consecrated, and that statues should be erected to them, that those who possess them, as all the good do possess them, should believe that gods themselves dwell in their souls."‡ Le Clerc, after given the enumeration which I have quoted from him, says: "It does not seem probable to me that the Romans believed in all these gods with a clear assent of mind." They did not, I conceive, believe in them as gods having a personal existence, from whom favors might be obtained by supplication; they regarded them as qualities having something divine in their nature, to which public honors should be paid with appropriate rites. §

* *Ars Critica*, P. II. S. 1. c. 8. § 8.

† *De Legibus*, Lib. II. § 8.

‡ *Ibid.* § 11.

§ Thus, during the atheistical madness of the French Revolution, it was proposed to establish the worship of Reason, and the five inter-

In regard to irrational and inanimate things there is a liability to mistake. We must not reckon among them the sun, the moon, or the stars, or other things which we regard as inanimate, but which the ancients believed to be vehicles of personal divinities, to whom, and not to the inanimate bodies, they rendered worship. But there is no question that the name of "god" was given to beings regarded as irrational and inanimate. Of this we have a remarkable proof in the deification by the Egyptians of whole classes of animals, as the ibis, the ichneumon, and the crocodile, and even of vegetables. "The Egyptians," says the elder Pliny, "swear by garlic and onions, as gods;"* and Juvenal† and Prudentius‡ refer to the same superstition. No one can imagine that the Egyptians worshipped these animals and vegetables as personal divinities; but they conceived that there was some divine power in them, or that they were something sacred. The point to be regarded is, that the common name "god" was so widely extended as to be applied to them. There were other strange applications of it. The example is ludicrous; but we have the authority of Aristotle for saying that it was given to a sneeze. He proposes the problem: "Why do we consider a sneeze to be θεός?"§ — certainly not meaning by that term "a god," but "something divine." And he seriously discusses the question, why this name was not given to some other ac-

calary days at the end of the year were consecrated as festivals of Genius, of Labor, of Actions, of Rewards, and of Opinion.

* Hist. Nat. Lib. XIX. § 32.

† Sat. XV. vv. 9-11.

‡ De Coronis, Hymnus X. vv. 259, 260. Contra Symmachi Orat. Lib. II. vv. 865-867.

§ Διὰ τί τὸν παρμὸν θεὸν ἡγούμεθα εἶναι; "Is it," says Aristotle, "because it proceeds from the most divine part of us, the head, where are the reasoning powers? Or because the others [other affections of the body before mentioned by him] are the consequence of disease, but this is not?" Problemata. Sect. 33. § 7.

cidents of the body, which he regards as analogous, but which at the present day we are not accustomed to name.*

Thus it appears, that the most generic meaning of *θεός* and *deus* was merely "something divine," that term being taken in a very loose sense, admitting of no precise definition. There was only a popular and vague conception of the quality meant to be denoted by them in their most extensive application. It is evident, therefore, that there are cases of their occurrence in the singular number, in which we should render either of them erroneously by giving as an equivalent the term "god." We should use the words "something divine" or "divinity" or "divine power," or some like expression. Thus when *θεός* or *deus* is used in the singular by ancient heathen writers, it may be employed, not to denote any personal being distinctly conceived of, but that divine power, "*quicquid est hoc*,"† which controls the universe.‡

* Ibid. § 9.

† This expression is from Pacuvius, as quoted by Cicero in his first Book *de Divinatione* (§ 57). The verses of Pacuvius may serve further to illustrate the conception spoken of above.

"Quicquid est hoc, omnia animat, format, alit, auget, creat,
Sepelit, recipitque in sese omnia; omniumque idem est pater;
Indidemque eademque oriuntur, de integro, atque eodem occidunt."

‡ There was anciently a popular use of the word *deus* in the singular number, which several of the Latin fathers have appealed to, as showing a natural consciousness in men of the one God. The object of Tertullian, in his Treatise "On the Testimony of the Soul," is to prove, that the soul, even while yet unchristianized, instinctively bears testimony to the truths of Christianity; and he thus (cap. 2) apostrophizes it, considered as the soul of a Heathen:—"We give offence," he says, "by preaching the only God, the author and ruler of all things, under that only name. Give your testimony, if you know this to be so. For we hear you openly and with all liberty, which is not permitted us, pronounce at home and abroad, '*Quod deus dederit*,' and '*Quod deus voluerit*.'" This use of *deus* in the singular Tertul-

BUT we must distinguish between those heathen writers who preceded, and those who followed, the introduction of

lian considers as a recognition of the One God. He adds: — "Nor are you ignorant of what we preach concerning the nature of God. You say, '*Deus bonus*,' '*Deus benefacit*,' and add, 'but man is bad (*sed homo est malus*).'"

It is not to be supposed, that Tertullian, and the other fathers who employed this argument, believed that the commonalty among the Heathen, when they used these expressions, had in their thoughts a distinct conception of that God, whom they acknowledged in none of their rites of worship, and "whom it was a thing forbidden to point out to the vulgar."^{*} The fathers, I conceive, so far as they understood themselves, regarded those expressions as an instinctive recognition, not well comprehended by those who uttered them, of a truth originally stamped upon the soul: — "*Adeo ipsa veritas*," says Lactantius, "*cogente naturâ, etiam ab invitis pectoribus erumpit*."

But the argument, like so many others in ancient writers, is a mere rhetorical sophism. In the words "*Quod deus dederit*," as in all the other expressions alleged, the name *deus* must be taken in one of the following senses: — "*Quod deus dederit*" may mean, "Which may a god grant"; or "Which may the god grant," — meaning some particular god in the mind of the speaker; or "Which may the gods grant"; or "Which may divine power grant."

In regard to the meaning, "Which may the gods grant," we see in the words "*Deus bonus, sed homo est malus*," that *homo* is to be understood in a plural signification, and in the same manner we may understand *deus*.

But in such ejaculations as "*Quod deus dederit*," we may conjecture, that, so far as any meaning was defined in the mind of him who uttered them, the reference was to divine power considered in the abstract, and not as existing in any particular being or beings. If this explanation be correct, the argument of the fathers was not so obvious a sophism as it must otherwise appear. It might be stated thus: In this recognition of a Divine Power, by which events are ordered, and which is not referred by you to any one of the gods whom you ordinarily worship, there is evidence of that conception of the Divinity which belongs to the nature of the soul.

Cudworth (Ch. IV. § 27. p. 453) and Le Clerc (*Ars Critica*, P. II.

^{*} See before, p. 25.

Christianity. The use of *θεός* and *deus* as common names was the necessary result of the general prevalence of poly-

S. I. c. 2. § 10) both remark on this argument of the fathers. Cudworth, from the expressions cited, strangely concludes that it was "very familiar with the vulgar Pagans in their ordinary discourse to speak of *God* singularly, signifying thereby the one Supreme Deity." Le Clerc, on the contrary, considers *deus*, when used in the ejaculations mentioned, as referring to "a god, whoever he might be, who was regarded as presiding over the affair in hand"; and consequently views the argument as futile.

But there is still another fact respecting this subject which deserves attention. We learn from Tertullian (as before quoted, and likewise Apologet. cap. 17), from Minutius Felix (c. 18), from Cyprian (*De Idolorum Vanitate*, Opp. p. 227. Ed. Baluz.), from Arnobius (Lib. II. c. 2), and from Lactantius (*Div. Institut.* Lib. II. c. 1), that the use of such expressions as Tertullian remarks, in which *deus* occurs in the singular number, was common in their time among Heathens who spoke the Latin language. Thus Minutius Felix says:—"Audio vulgus, cum ad cælum manus tendunt, nihil aliud quam *deum* dicunt, et *deus magnus est*, et *deus verus est*, et *si deus dederit*. Vulgi iste naturalis sermo est, an Christiani confitentis oratio?" According to Lactantius, it was common to ask charity, not in the name of the gods, but of God:—"Si quis, ad extremam mendicandi necessitatem deductus, victum precibus exposcit, Deum solum obtestatur, et per ejus divinum atque unicum nomen hominum sibi misericordiam querit." It appears, then, that these modes of expression, which are remarkable from the occurrence of *deus* in the singular, were familiarly used by Heathens from the end of the second century, if not earlier.

But, going back two or three centuries before Christianity, we find, on the other hand, evidence that such expressions were not ordinarily used,—that they did not belong to the language of the generality. Plautus and Terence, in their Comedies, give us the language of common life; and such expressions do not occur in their writings. In no case corresponding to those mentioned by the Latin fathers is the word *deus* used by them in the singular. On the contrary, its use in the plural is of constant occurrence, in a great variety of forms of speech, such as the following:—"Ita me di ament," "Di te ser-

theism. But when the unity of God, and the infinite distinction between him and all other beings, are fully recognized, the terms denoting the possession of divine attributes become confined, in their strict and literal application, to the only being by whom such attributes are possessed. By the writers of the New Testament the appellation *Θεός*, either with or without the article, is constantly used as a proper name, in the same manner as the word "God" is used at the present day. We are familiar with the fact, and it may not, without some consideration, make an impression on our minds. But considering the universal use of *θεός* as a common name by the whole heathen world before their time, and by Christians, as we shall see, subsequent to their time, it is a fact, I conceive, which admits of no explanation, except that which is found in the divine origin of the Jewish and Christian dispensations.

The rapid and wide influence of Christianity, even on those by whom it was rejected, produced a tendency to a similar use of it in their writings. The light of our religion was early reflected from the heathen philosophy which stood opposed to it. But the heathen writers after the time of Christ, who used *ὁ θεός* or *θεός* or *deus* to designate the Supreme Divinity, or the Supreme Power in Nature, at the same time believed in subordinate gods; and therefore still continued to employ the words as common names. The use of them was vacillating; men's notions were unsettled; and their meaning in particular passages is often to be deter-

vent," "*Di te perdant*," "*Per omnes deos adjuro*," "*Per te obsecro deos immortales*," "*Di sciunt*," "*Di! quæso subvenite*," "*Id testor deos*," "*Di! obsecro vos*," "*Di prohibeant*," and many more.

How are these facts to be explained? The conceptions and language of Christians affected the writings of the heathen philosophers, their contemporaries. Must we not conclude that they affected in like manner the forms of speech used by the heathen commonalty?

mined only by the known opinions of the writer, and by the attributes or acts which he ascribes to the being of whom he speaks.

The early fathers familiarly used *Θεός* and *Deus* as proper names. But they likewise fell back on the use of those words as common names. The latter use of them, however, is not to be confounded with a metaphorical use of the name of God, not infrequent in some authors both ancient and modern, according to which the name "god" is applied to inferior beings, as to men, for example, considered as possessing attributes like those of God. This metaphorical use of the term is common in the writings of Clement of Alexandria,* and not less so in the "Night Thoughts" of Young. But when the term is in use as a common name, it is not always easy to distinguish between the metaphorical and the generic use of it, and the writer himself may not well discriminate between them. We can hardly doubt, however, that Clement uses the term as a common name, when he speaks of "the whole army of angels and gods being subject to the Son of God."†

Of the use of the terms *θεός* and *deus* as common names by the earlier fathers the most remarkable example is found in the application of them to the *Logos*, considered as a real person, or, in other words, to the Son or Christ. Of this some passages which I have formerly quoted in relation to another subject afford illustration.‡ An indefinite number of others might be adduced. It is a main purpose of Justin Martyr, in his "Dialogue with Trypho," to prove that there is another god, the *Logos*, besides the Supreme Being. He says to Trypho and his companions, — "I will endeavour to convince you, who understand the Scriptures [the Old Tes-

* See Statement of Reasons, pp. 67, 68.

† Stromat. VII. § 2. p. 831.

‡ See Vol. II. p. 250, seqq.

tament], that, under the Maker of All,* there is another, who is, and is called, god and lord, and who is also called an angel, because he is the minister of the Maker of All, above whom there is no other god, in whatever communications it is his will to make to men."† Tertullian, in maintaining the personal divinity of the Logos, says: — "We believe that there is one only God; but we believe also, that of this only God there is a Son, his Logos," and that he "was sent by his Father into a virgin, and born from her a man and a god."‡ This is one of the many passages which show what confusion, and even what apparent contradiction of terms, were produced by using the word "god" both as a proper and a common name. Origen, borrowing the remark from Philo,§ contends, that while the Only True God, he who is God by himself (*αὐτόθεος ὁ Θεός*) is alone to be called ὁ Θεός (*The Divine Being*), there are many, and, in the first place, the Logos, to whom the name *θεός* (*a divine being*) without the article may be given; they being made *gods*, that is, divine beings, by a participation of the divinity of God.|| We find this notion of other beings becoming "gods" (*dii*) by a participation of divinity, even so late as the sixth century, in Boethius. "Beatitude," he says, "is divinity." "Every being, therefore, possessing beatitude is a god (*Omnis igitur beatus, deus*). By nature there is, indeed, but one God, but nothing prevents that there should be very many by participation."¶ Perhaps, however, the

* — ὑπὸ τὸν ποιητὴν τῶν ὅλων. The true reading is ὑπὸ, not ὑπὲρ (which is a conjecture of R. Stephens). See Thirlby's note, and the Benedictine (Maran's) edition, p. 151.

† Pag. 249. Ed. Thirlbii.

‡ Advers. Praxeam, c. 2. p. 501. See before, p. 175, note.

§ Philo, De Somniis, Lib. I. Opp. I. 655.

|| Comment. in Joan. T. II. Opp. IV. 51, 52.

¶ De Consolatione, Lib. III. Prosa 10.

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word is here used metaphorically rather than as a common name.

There is no doubt that the earlier fathers gave the name "god" to the Logos as a common name, using it in a sense altogether different from that in which they regarded it as the appropriate name of the Supreme Being. But they also applied it to the Logos in the latter sense by a common metonymy; the Logos being considered as the representative and the instrument of God, as an hypostatized attribute of God, and as a being who was one with God in purpose and will. This figurative use of the word was blended with its use as a common name, and seemed to justify it.

Of the confusion of thought and indistinctness of meaning produced by the use of *θεός* and *deus* sometimes as proper and sometimes as common names we have an example in the charge brought by the catholic Christians against the Gnostics, that the Gnostics taught the existence of two Gods, the Supreme Being and the Creator. It was as a common name that the Gnostics applied the term "god" to the Creator, and not in the sense in which both they and the catholic Christians used it as the proper name of God. They might have retorted on the catholic Christians, that the latter, in giving the name "god" to the Logos, taught the existence of two Gods, or even, as appears from what precedes, that they taught the existence of many Gods.

OTHER remarks might be added, but they would tend, perhaps, to divert attention from the main facts that have been stated; and, supposing those facts to be true, they are such as every intelligent scholar may make for himself.

CORRECTIONS AND REMARKS.

Vol. I. p. 118. I have thus rendered a passage from Strauss: — “Certainly it would be of decisive weight to establish the credibility of the Bible-history, were it proved that it was written by eyewitnesses, *or even by contemporaries in the neighbourhood of the events.*”

I have since observed, that I should have rendered the last clause thus: — “*or even by persons nearly contemporary with the events.*” The words of the original are: — “oder doch [von] nahen Zeitgenossen der Begebenheiten”; that is, literally, *or by near contemporaries of the events.*

This somewhat ambiguous expression I now perceive is explained by the commencement of the next paragraph, in which it is asserted, that “the pretence, that the Biblical writers were eyewitnesses of the events related by them, or *lived near the time* of their occurrence, is a mere assumption.” “Doch diese angebliche Augenzeugenschaft oder Zeitnahe der biblischen Schriftsteller auf die von ihnen erzählten Begebenheiten ist vorerst gleichfalls nur Vorurtheil.”

In recurring to the sentence I quoted, for the purpose of translating it, I had forgotten the explanation of it given by Strauss; and looking only at the sentence itself, I could not, as may readily be supposed, believe that any writer meant to express by it what it appears that Strauss really intended.

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According to him, when properly understood, it is alone sufficient to authenticate a history, that it was written, not by "a contemporary in the neighbourhood of the events," — that was an error of my own, — but by "a person nearly contemporary with the events." This is a position on which it is embarrassing to remark; since to offer any comment on it may be mistaken as implying disrespect for the understanding of one's readers. I may, however, be excused for saying, that, if the fact, that a writer is nearly contemporary with the events which he professes to relate, be sufficient to authenticate his narrative, much more (as is said in Euclid's demonstrations) must be the fact of his being a contemporary; whence it follows, that if any one at the present day should give an account of the British war in Afghanistan, whatever might be his character or his means of information, his history ought to be received as authentic.

But the principles which Strauss lays down to guide us in judging of the credibility of histories have particular reference to the Gospels; and these are full of accounts of miracles, that is, according to him, of supposed events which are impossible in the nature of things. It appears, therefore, that impossible events become credible, if related by a person nearly contemporary with their occurrence; or rather we must say, to avoid too glaring an absurdity of expression, nearly contemporary with the time of their supposed occurrence.

Vol. I. p. 125. I have quoted on this page the note of De Wette on a passage of Luke to which he refers to prove that the Gospel of Luke was not written till after the destruction of Jerusalem, and have remarked the ambiguous use in it of the words "those" and "these." This am-

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biguity he has removed, in the third edition of his Commentary, published in 1846, by the insertion of a parenthesis, so that his note now stands thus : —

“That Luke, in contradiction to Matthew, assigns an earlier date for the persecutions of the Christians, that is, before those wars and tumults, betrays the fact, that, at the time when he wrote, those, indeed (namely, the persecutions related in the seventh and eighth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, and, perhaps, the persecution of Nero), but not these, had taken place.”

This insertion does not alter the essential character of his comment, but shows that it had passed anew under his inspection. If the fact were not before our eyes, it might seem an incredible supposition, that a writer should refer to a passage in Luke, which he considers as carrying with it evidence that it was written before the wars and tumults which preceded the destruction of Jerusalem, for the purpose of proving that Luke's Gospel was not written till after the destruction of Jerusalem.

Vol. I. p. 83, note, line 1. For ‘τὸν’ read ‘τῆν.’

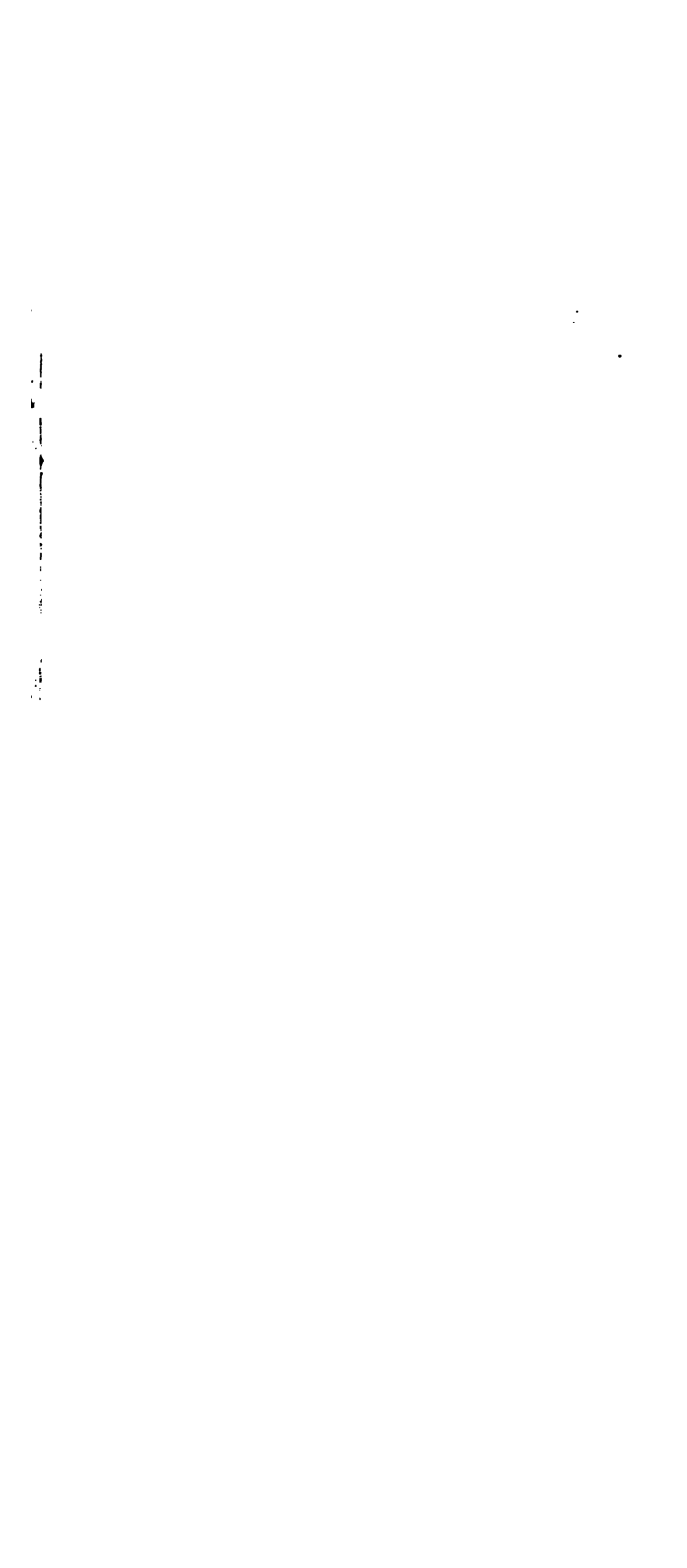
Vol. II. p. 60, note †. For ‘c. 7’ read ‘c. 27.’

p. lxxiii., line 17. For ‘Agar’ read ‘Agur.’











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